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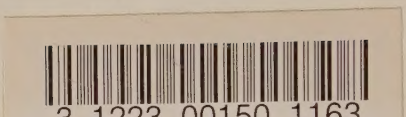
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FROM CHATTANOOGA TO PETERSBURG UNDER GENERALS GRANT AND BUTLER

A CONTRIBUTION TO THE HISTORY OF THE WAR, AND A PERSONAL VINDICATION

BY

WILLIAM FARRAR SMITH

BREVET MAJOR-GENERAL, U. S. ARMY, AND LATE MAJOR-GENERAL OF VOLUNTEERS

WITH MAPS AND PLANS

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY
The Riverside Press, Cambridge
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NOTE.

SINCE the preface was written and the book put in type the death of General Butler has been announced. The compilation of the volume has progressed with diligence since it was begun, and its beginning was as early as the publication of the "Official Records," upon which it depended, would allow.

PREFACE.

ALTHOUGH the purpose of this volume is personal, it is hoped that it possesses sufficient historical interest to be on that account worthy of publication.

For thirty years I have quietly lived under gross misrepresentation of my military record, with a feeling of confidence that some seeker after truth, for historical purposes, would eventually discover the facts and do me justice.

A recent publication by General Butler, coming out as it did only a short time before the volumes of the "Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies," which covered the events of the campaign in 1864, determined me to place before the public my military history in that campaign, drawn from the pages of the "Records."

In the work of collecting material and placing the evidence in logical form, I have been greatly aided by Mr. George Otis Shattuck and Mr.

John Codman Ropes, of Boston, who in the midst of their busy lives have come voluntarily to my assistance. To them are due my grateful acknowledgments.

WILLIAM FARRAR SMITH.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

Generals Grant and Halleck on General Butler. — His removal from the command of the Army of the James, and my appointment to it by President Lincoln. — My removal, and the restoration of General Butler by General Grant 1

CHAPTER II.

Services under General Grant at and near Chattanooga, and the estimates of their value by Generals Grant, Sherman, and Thomas 8

CHAPTER III.

Services near Bermuda Hundred, Cold Harbor, and Petersburg. — The estimates of them by Generals Meigs, Barnard, Butler, and Grant 17

CHAPTER IV.

General Butler moves upon General Grant, and secures at once my removal and his restoration to command . 41

CHAPTER V.

General Grant's subsequent misrepresentations of my conduct at the assault on Petersburg, June 15, 1864, with a true account of that assault as shown by the recently published "War Records" 60

CHAPTER VI.

Upon whom rests the responsibility for the failure to capture Petersburg in 1864, and General Grant's misrepresentations upon the subject 113

CHAPTER VII.

Services under General Butler in May and June, 1864, and what he said of them at the time 135

CHAPTER VIII.

PROOF FROM THE "WAR RECORDS" THAT GENERAL BUTLER'S STATEMENTS WITH REFERENCE TO ME IN HIS BOOK ARE FALSE 140

ROSTER OF THE ARMY OF THE JAMES 172

APPENDIX No. 1. GENERAL SMITH TO SENATOR FOOTE . . 174
APPENDIX No. 2. GENERAL RAWLINS TO GENERAL GRANT . 179
APPENDIX No. 3. CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN GENERAL BUTLER AND GENERALS GILLMORE AND SMITH 181
APPENDIX No. 4. ASSISTANT SECRETARY DANA TO SECRETARY STANTON 184
APPENDIX No. 5. CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN GENERAL BUTLER AND GENERAL SMITH 186
APPENDIX No. 6. LETTER OF LIEUTENANT-COLONEL MORDECAI 189
APPENDIX No. 7. LETTER OF GENERAL HINCKS . . . 190
APPENDIX No. 8. LETTER OF GENERAL WISTAR . . . 191

INDEX 195

NOTE. — In the pocket at the end of this volume will be found four maps and plans, showing the country covered by the Army of the James from May 5, 1864, to June 15, 1864, and the enemy's works in front of Petersburg.

FROM

CHATTANOOGA TO PETERSBURG.

CHAPTER I.

GENERALS GRANT AND HALLECK ON GENERAL BUTLER. — HIS REMOVAL FROM THE COMMAND OF THE ARMY OF THE JAMES, AND MY APPOINTMENT TO IT BY PRESIDENT LINCOLN. — MY REMOVAL, AND THE RESTORATION OF GENERAL BUTLER BY GENERAL GRANT.

On the 1st of July, 1864, the survivors of the splendid Army of the Potomac, which had crossed the Rapidan on the 4th of May, were in front of Petersburg. The army was anxiously waiting to be recruited for another effort, and it had appealed to the inexhaustible patriotism of the North for another half million of men.

The Army of the Department of Virginia and North Carolina, under Major-General Benjamin F. Butler, called the Army of the James, had utterly failed in a campaign against Richmond, on the south side of the James River. This army, consisting of the 10th and 18th Corps, had, after a loss of several thousand men, been cooped up by a small force of the enemy, which had built a

short line of breastworks between the James and Appomattox rivers.

A part of the Army of the James, under my command, was with the Army of the Potomac in front of Petersburg, and a part in Bermuda Hundred was idly watching the intrenchments of the enemy in their front. On that day General Grant wrote a letter to General Halleck, chief of staff of President Lincoln, in which he described General Butler as a very able administrative officer, but unfit for command in the field, and suggested that a new department should be formed in the West, "where there were no great battles to be fought, but a dissatisfied element to control," and that General Butler should be assigned to its command. In the same letter he described me as "really one of the most efficient officers in the service, readiest in expedients, and most skillful in the management of troops in action." [1] On the 3d of July, General Halleck wrote to General Grant the following reply: —

HEADQUARTERS OF THE ARMY,
WASHINGTON, *July* 3, 1864.

LIEUT.-GEN. U. S. GRANT, City Point, Va.:

GENERAL, — Your note of the 1st instant in relation to General Butler is just received. I will, as you propose, await further advices from you before I submit the matter officially to the Secretary of War and the President. It was

[1] This letter is inserted in full on pp. 29, 30.

foreseen from the first that you would eventually find it necessary to relieve General B. on account of his total unfitness to command in the field, and his generally quarrelsome character. What shall be done with him has, therefore, already been, as I am informed, a matter of consultation. To send him to Kentucky would probably cause an insurrection in that State and an immediate call for large reinforcements. Moreover, he would probably greatly embarrass Sherman, if he did not attempt to supersede him, by using against him all his talent at political intrigue, and his facilities for newspaper abuse. If you send him to Missouri, nearly the same thing will occur there. Although it might not be objectionable to have a free fight between him and Rosecrans, the Government would be seriously embarrassed by the local difficulties and calls for reinforcements likely to follow. Inveterate as is Rosecrans' habit of continually calling for more troops, Butler differs only in demanding instead of calling. As things now stand in the West, I think we can keep the peace, but if Butler be thrown in as a disturbing element, I anticipate very serious results. Why not leave General Butler in the local command of his department, including North Carolina, Norfolk, Fort Monroe, Yorktown, &c., and make a new army corps of the part of the Eighteenth under Smith? This would leave B. under your immediate control, and at the same time would relieve you of his

presence in the field. Moreover, it would save the necessity of organizing a new department. If he must be relieved entirely, I think it would be best to make a new department for him in New England. I make these remarks merely as suggestions. Whatever you may finally determine on I will try to have done. As General B. claims to rank me, I shall give him no orders wherever he may go, without the special direction of yourself or the Secretary of War.

Yours truly,

H. W. Halleck, Major-General.[1]

On the 6th of July, in reply to this, General Grant sent to General Halleck the following: —

Headquarters, City Point, *July* 6, 1864, 10 A. M.

Major-General Halleck, Chief of Staff:

Please obtain an order assigning the troops of the Department of Virginia and North Carolina serving in the field to the command of Maj.-Gen. W. F. Smith,[2] and order Major-General Butler, commanding department, to his headquarters, Fortress Monroe. . . .

U. S. Grant, Lieutenant-General.[3]

On the 7th of July, with the approval of

[1] *War Records*, vol. 81, p. 598.

[2] This would have given me the command of the Army of the James.

[3] *War Records*, vol. 82, p. 31.

President Lincoln, General Order No. 225 was issued in the following terms: —[1]

"The troops of the Department of North Carolina and Virginia serving with the Army of the Potomac in the field under Major-General Smith will constitute the Eighteenth Army Corps, and Maj.-Gen. William F. Smith is assigned to the command of the corps. Maj.-Gen. B. F. Butler will command the remainder of the troops in that department, having his headquarters at Fort Monroe."

During the period covered by this correspondence I was in the intrenchments at Petersburg. On the 10th of July, I left for New York on leave of absence, given by General Grant, for the benefit of my health. On my return, on the 19th of July, I learned from him that Order No. 225 had been suspended by him, that General Butler had been restored to the full command of his department, which was enlarged by the addition of the 19th Corps, and that I was to be relieved and ordered to New York.

For General Grant it is difficult to find any justification for thus keeping the lives of thousands of men under an incompetent commander, and for the blunders which resulted. To me the effect of this change was of only personal consequence. To General Butler it was of doubtful advantage, as on the 4th of January following he was relieved from service and sent to Lowell

[1] *War Records*, vol. 82, p. 69.

for having concealed from General Weitzel instructions which General Grant had ordered him to transmit for the attack on Fort Fisher, for having taken personal command of the expedition which had been intended for General Weitzel, and finally for having disgracefully retired from before Fort Fisher after the explosion of his powder boat.[1] It seems also from the letter which I insert, that he had lost the reputation for executive ability which he had possessed in July.

CITY POINT, VIRGINIA, *January* 4, 1865.

HON. E. M. STANTON, Secretary of War:

I am constrained to request the removal of Maj.-Gen. B. F. Butler from the command of the Department of Virginia and North Carolina. I do this with reluctance, but the good of the service requires it. In my absence General Butler necessarily commands, and there is a lack of confidence felt in his military ability, making him an unsafe commander for a large army. His administration of the affairs of his department is also objectionable.

U. S. GRANT, Lieutenant-General.[2]

Of the extraordinary conduct of General Grant in relieving me from a command for which he had just recommended me in the

[1] *War Records*, vol. 67, p. 44.
[2] *Butler's Book*, p. 829.

strongest terms, with a full and intimate knowledge of my capacity and services, and in restoring General Butler to his command and enlarging it, when he had just declared him incompetent, I could at the time get only a partial explanation. But General Grant's subsequent action, his report on the last year of the war made in July, 1865, his Memoirs published in 1883, the disclosures made by General Butler in his book, and, more than all, the recent publication of the "War Records" covering that period, which present a complete photograph of what occurred at that time, have revealed the influences and motives which led to that change.

In order that they may be understood, it will be necessary to state briefly my relations to General Grant and to General Butler, and what I accomplished under them, and to show also what each of them had done and failed to do with reference to the attack upon Petersburg during the months of May and June, 1864.

CHAPTER II.

SERVICES UNDER GENERAL GRANT AT AND NEAR CHATTANOOGA, AND THE ESTIMATES OF THEIR VALUE BY GENERALS GRANT, SHERMAN, AND THOMAS.

I HAD been with General Grant two years at West Point, had known him there, though not intimately, and had not seen him from that time until the 23d of October, 1863. His reputation, however, in the regular army and in civil life was well known to me, and I had followed his career during the Civil War with great curiosity. My intimate acquaintance with him began on the 23d of October, 1863, at Chattanooga, where I was then chief engineer of the Army of the Cumberland. He arrived at Chattanooga on that day. The communication of the army with its base of supplies at Bridgeport by the south side of the Tennessee River had been cut off by the enemy, who believed that they held the army at their mercy, and its destruction was only a question of time.[1] The condition of the army is well described by General Grant in his Memoirs: —

"This country afforded but little food for his

[1] Report of General Braxton Bragg; *War Records*, vol. 51, p. 37.

[Rosecrans'] animals, nearly ten thousand of which had already starved, and not enough were left to draw a single piece of artillery, or even the ambulances to convey the sick. The men had been on half rations of hard bread for a considerable time, with but few other supplies except beef driven from Nashville across the country. The region along the road became so exhausted of food for the cattle, that by the time they reached Chattanooga they were much in the condition of the few animals left alive there, — 'on the lift.' Indeed, the beef was so poor that the soldiers were in the habit of saying, with a faint facetiousness, that they were living on 'half rations of hard bread and *beef dried on the hoof*.'" [1]

On the morning of the 24th, I went with General Grant to reconnoitre an important position which I had discovered at the mouth of Lookout Valley. My plan was to seize by surprise the hills on the south side of the Tennessee River at Brown's Ferry, build a pontoon bridge, and thus obtain possession of Lookout Valley, and recover the old line of communication and the control of the river. The arrangements had been partially completed before the arrival of General Grant, General Thomas having approved the plan shortly after he took command. Grant at once gave it his sanction, and although I was an officer of engineers, I was put by him in command of the forces to capture the heights

[1] *Personal Memoirs of General Grant*, vol. ii. p. 24.

and gap on the south side of the river and Lookout Valley. The entire movement was successful, the army was relieved, it was made possible for General Sherman's force to reach Chattanooga, which in its turn made possible the victory of Missionary Ridge.

As regards the merit and importance of the achievement, I will only quote from others.

General George H. Thomas was then in command of the Army of the Cumberland. November 1, 1863, he issued the following order: —

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF THE CUMBERLAND,
CHATTANOOGA, *November* 1, 1863.

The general commanding tenders his thanks to Brig.-Gen. W. F. Smith and the officers and men of the expedition under his command, consisting of the brigades of Brigadier-Generals Turchin and Hazen, the boat parties under Col. T. R. Stanley, Eighteenth Ohio Volunteers, and the pioneer bridge party, Captain Fox, Michigan Engineers, for the skill and cool gallantry displayed in securing a permanent lodgment on the south side of the river at Brown's Ferry, and in putting in position the pontoon bridge, on the night of the 26th instant. The successful execution of this duty was attended with the most important results in obtaining a safe and easy communication with Bridgeport and shortening our line of supplies.

By command of Major-General Thomas.[1]

[1] *War Records*, vol. 54, p. 68.

In General Order No. 265, issued November 7, 1863, General Thomas said : —

"The recent movements resulting in the establishment of a new and short line of communication with Bridgeport and the possession of the Tennessee River were of so brilliant a character as to deserve special notice. The skill and cool gallantry of the officers and men composing the expedition under Brig.-Gen. William F. Smith . . . deserve the highest praise." [1]

In a later report General Thomas says : —

"The seizure of Brown's Ferry and the splendid defense of Lookout Valley by General Hooker's command decided the question of our ability to hold Chattanooga, for steamers began immediately to carry rations from Bridgeport to Kelley's Ferry, leaving but about eight miles of wagon transportation from that point to Chattanooga. . . .

"The enemy made no further attempt to regain Lookout Valley after it had slipped from his grasp, and confined himself to an occasional cannon shot from the top of Lookout as he watched our trains undisturbedly moving from Kelley's Ferry across the valley bearing rations to a grateful army. . . .

"To Brigadier-General W. F. Smith, chief engineer, should be accorded great praise for the ingenuity which conceived, and the ability which executed, the movement at Brown's Ferry. . . .

[1] *War Records*, vol. 54, p. 68.

When the bridge was thrown at Brown's Ferry on the morning of the 27th the surprise was as great to the army within Chattanooga as it was to the army besieging it from without." [1]

The report of C. A. Dana, Assistant Secretary of War, to the Secretary, made October 28, was as follows: —

CHATTANOOGA, *October* 28, 1863, 5 P. M.

Everything perfectly successful. The river is now open, and a short and good road in our possession along the south shore. We had an insignificant skirmish near Wauhatchie. The great success, however, is General Smith's operation at the mouth of Lookout Valley. Its brilliancy cannot be exaggerated.

C. A. DANA.[2]

HON. E. M. STANTON, Secretary of War.

After the capture of Brown's Ferry and Lookout Valley and the reopening of the short line of communications to Bridgeport, I was diligently employed in reconnoitring the country about Chattanooga for the purpose of devising a plan for an advance against Bragg's army, as soon as Sherman should arrive with the Army of the Tennessee. This plan was submitted to General

[1] *Army of the Cumberland*, by Van Horne, vol. i. p. 398, taken from *Report on Conduct of the War*, supplement; part i. Report of General Thomas, pp. 119, 120.

[2] *War Records*, vol. 54, p. 72.

Grant and approved by him, and is given in his letters to General Burnside of November 14 or 15, and in his instructions to Thomas of November 18.[1]

The preliminary movements of Sherman, including his crossing of the Tennessee and march against Missionary Ridge, and the movement of the cavalry brigade towards the Holston River, were all in accordance with the original plan, but a report from a deserter, November 22, that Bragg was preparing to fall back, induced General Grant to order General Thomas to move to his front on a reconnoissance in force, and that made the further carrying out of the original plan impossible.

Of General Sherman's movement, that officer, in his Memoirs,[2] says: "I will here bear my willing testimony to the completeness of this whole business. All the officers charged with the work were present and manifested a skill which I cannot praise too highly. I have never beheld any work done so quietly, so well; and I doubt if the history of war can show a bridge of that extent (viz.: thirteen hundred and fifty feet) laid so noiselessly and well, in so short a time. I attribute it to the genius and intelligence of General William F. Smith."

General John M. Corse, whose bravery in holding the fort at Allatoona at a critical mo-

[1] *War Records*, vol. 55, pp. 30, 31.
[2] Vol. i. p. 374.

ment is known to all the world, writes under date of August 3, 1892, that "on the day preceding the assault on Missionary Ridge by Sherman's forces, I was selected by General Sherman to lead the assaulting column, and was taken by him to General Grant, when the general plan was shown and explained to me, and my position designated. In the course of the conversation General Grant gave General W. F. Smith the credit of the plan and spoke of him in the strongest terms of confidence and respect. General Macfeely, the late Commissary General of the army, said that Grant told him that 'Baldy' Smith was the ablest general in that army, and that the successful movement against Bragg was due to Smith."

From the time of the seizure of Brown's Ferry, on October 27, I had constant intercourse with General Grant, and discussed all the military movements with him freely. On the 12th of November, without solicitation or suggestion on my part, he promoted me to the position of chief engineer of the military division of the Mississippi, and on the same day he sent to the Secretary of War the following recommendation : —

Hon. E. M. Stanton, Secretary of War :

I would respectfully recommend that Brig.-Gen. W. F. Smith be placed first on the list for promotion to the rank of major-general. He is possessed of one of the clearest military heads in

the army ; is very practical and industrious. No man in the service is better qualified than he for our largest commands.[1]

I have the honor, &c.,
U. S. GRANT, Major-General.

As nothing had been done in Washington for my promotion, the reason being, as stated by Secretary Stanton, that there were no vacancies, on the 30th of November, General Grant wrote the following letter to President Lincoln : —

H'DQ'RS MILITARY DIVISION OF THE MISSISSIPPI,
CHATTANOOGA, TENN., *November* 30, 1863.

HIS EXCELLENCY ABRAHAM LINCOLN, President of the United States :

In a previous letter addressed to the Secretary of War, I recommended Brig.-Gen. Wm. F. Smith for promotion. Recent events have entirely satisfied me of his great capabilities and merits, and I hasten to renew the recommendation and to urge it. The interests of the public service would be better subserved by this promotion than the interest of General Smith himself. My reason for writing this letter now is to ask that W. F. Smith's name be placed first on the list for promotion of all those previously recommended by me.

I have the honor, etc.
U. S. GRANT, Major-General.[2]

[1] *War Records*, vol. 56, p. 122.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 277.

No stronger tribute could have been paid to my services or capacities. I need not say that I felt grateful and became warmly attached to General Grant and his interests. My friendly feelings seemed to be reciprocated by him. I was on his staff constantly with him at Nashville and elsewhere in the West until the end of February, 1864. By his invitation I came East with him in his private car when he came to Washington early in March, 1864, to accept the position of Lieutenant-General. Before he went into the field, I was absent on informal leave and in New York with my family. On the 31st of March he directed me to meet him in Washington. I went with him to Fortress Monroe and was assigned to the command of the 18th Army Corps in the field.

CHAPTER III.

SERVICES NEAR BERMUDA HUNDRED, COLD HARBOR, AND PETERSBURG. — THE ESTIMATES OF THEM BY GENERALS MEIGS, BARNARD, BUTLER, AND GRANT.

The 18th Army Corps was in the Department of Virginia and North Carolina, then under the command of General Benjamin F. Butler. It appears to have been General Grant's intention, as shown by his letter to General Meade, dated April 9, 1864, that I should command all the troops of that Department in the field.[1] But his intention was never acted on. General Gillmore commanded the 10th Army Corps in the same Department. From the early part of April I was engaged in organizing and drilling my troops. On the 5th of May we landed at Bermuda Hundred and opened a campaign against Richmond.

Although the plan of General Butler's campaign was, as I shall presently show, in direct violation of the orders of General Grant, and against an earnest written remonstrance signed by General Gillmore and myself, I entered upon it with a determination to do my best. The

[1] *Personal Memoirs of General Grant*, vol. ii. p. 134.

officers and men fought as bravely as men ever fought. Thousands of lives were wasted and little was accomplished. General Grant expected me to accomplish something, and was bitterly disappointed, and on the 21st of May he wrote as follows to General Halleck, who was the Chief of Staff of President Lincoln : —

H'dq'rs Armies of the United States.
In the Field, *May* 21, 1864, 7 A. M. (Received 10.35 A. M.)

Maj.-Gen. H. W. Halleck, Chief of Staff :

I fear there is some difficulty with the forces at City Point[1] which prevents their effective use. The fault may be with the commander, and it may be with his subordinates. General Smith, whilst a very able officer, is obstinate, and is likely to condemn whatever is not suggested by himself. Either those forces should be so occupied as to detain a force nearly equal to their own, or the garrison in the intrenchments at City Point should be reduced to a minimum, and the remainder ordered here. I wish you would send a competent officer there to inspect, and report by telegraph what is being done and what in his judgment it is advisable to do.

U. S. Grant, Lieutenant-General.[2]

On the same day General Halleck issued to General M. C. Meigs and General J. G. Barnard

[1] This reference to City Point seems important.
[2] *War Records*, vol. 69, p. 43.

an order directing that they should "immediately proceed to army on James River, examine the position which it occupies, and means of defense. . . . General Grant wishes particularly to know what is being done there, and what, in your judgment, it is advisable to do." [1]

General Meigs and General Barnard were among the ablest officers in the army, and they proceeded at once to Bermuda Hundred. I did not see them or either of them, or communicate with them directly or indirectly. They must have obtained their information from headquarters.

May 23, 1864, they reported: "We have not yet been able fully to post ourselves as to the relations of the corps commanders, but think the report of want of harmony may be exaggerated, at least so far as General Smith is concerned." [2]

May 24, 1864, they reported, among other things, as follows: —

"What in our opinion ought to be done is either, first, to place an officer of military experience and knowledge in command of these two corps, thus making them a unit for field operations, and then assume the offensive; or, second, to withdraw twenty thousand men to be used elsewhere. General Butler is a man of rare and great ability, but he has not experience and training to enable him to direct and control movements in battle. A corps gives its com-

[1] *War Records*, vol. 69, p. 68. [2] *Ib.*, p. 141.

mander full occupation on the battlefield, and leaves him no time to make suggestions to the commander-in-chief as to the movements of two corps. General Butler is satisfied with the ability and aid of General William F. Smith. He does not appear to be satisfied with General Gillmore. General Butler evidently desires to retain command in the field. If his desires must be gratified, withdraw Gillmore, place Smith in command of both corps under the supreme command of General Butler; let Smith put Brooks in command of one corps, and Weitzel of the other, unless you can send here better officers. You will thus have a command which will be a unit, and General Butler will probably be guided by Smith, and leave to him the suggestions and practical execution of army movements ordered. Success would be more certain were Smith in command untrammeled, and General Butler remanded to the administrative duties of the department in which he has shown such rare and great ability." [1]

General Barnard also reported orally to General Grant [2] as follows: "General Barnard reported the position very strong for defensive purposes and that I could do the latter [*i. e.*, withdraw troops] with great security; but that General Butler could not move from where he was, in coöperation, to produce any effect. He

[1] *War Records*, vol. 69, p. 178.

[2] *Personal Memoirs of General Grant*, vol. ii. pp. 151–153.

said that the general occupied a place between the James and Appomattox rivers, which was of great strength, and where with an inferior force he could hold it for an indefinite length of time against a superior; but that he could do nothing offensively. I then asked him why Butler could not move out from his lines and push across the Richmond and Petersburg Railroad to the rear and on the south side of Richmond. He replied that it was impracticable, because the enemy had substantially the same line across the neck of land that General Butler had. He then took out his pencil and drew a sketch of the locality, remarking that the position was like a bottle and that Butler's line of intrenchments across the neck represented the cork; that the enemy had built an equally strong line immediately in front of him across the neck, and it was, therefore, as if Butler was in a bottle."

This shows clearly that it was not supposed to be my fault that nothing had been accomplished.

Soon afterwards I received an order to concentrate my command, including with it the division of General Ames of the 10th Corps, and to join the Army of the Potomac. When my command left Bermuda Hundred it consisted of very nearly sixteen thousand infantry, sixteen pieces of artillery, and a squadron of cavalry of about one hundred men. I arrived at White House on the 30th of May. On the 1st of June I was directed to take a position near Cold

Harbor, at the right of General Wright, who had been ordered to attack. I was ordered to coöperate with him and join in the attack. We were engaged during the days of awful and useless butchery which followed. I have never heard my own conduct or that of my men in that battle criticised. General Grant in his Memoirs[1] says: "Wright's corps moving in two lines captured the outer rifle pits, in their front, but accomplished nothing more. Smith's corps also gained the outer rifle pits in its front. The ground over which this corps [18th] had to move was the most exposed of any over which charges were made. An open plain intervened between the contending forces at this point, which was exposed both to a direct and a cross fire. Smith, however, finding a ravine running towards his front sufficiently deep to protect men in it from cross fire, and somewhat from a direct fire, put Martindale's division in it, and with Brooks supporting him on the left, and Devens on the right, succeeded in gaining the outer — probably picket — rifle pits."

We held that line nine days. On the night of the 12th of June we slipped away silently, less than ten thousand men in all, marched all night, embarked at the White House, and arrived at Bermuda Hundred during the afternoon and night of the 14th.

I arrived at Bermuda Hundred with my aids

[1] *Personal Memoirs of General Grant*, vol. ii. p. 271.

about sunset, and was told that I was to have Kautz's cavalry and Hincks's division of colored troops added to my force, and that I was to proceed at two o'clock A. M. to attack Petersburg.[1] Owing to delay caused by the cavalry, we did not move until five A. M. on the 15th. We met the enemy about six A. M., but we fought our way, capturing rifle pits and one piece of artillery, and formed our lines in front of the fortifications of Petersburg. I ordered batteries into position, and they were immediately driven out by the enemy's fire. I found from the great strength of the fortifications, the wide open spaces along the entire front, and the heavy and well-directed artillery fire of the enemy, which prevented our getting any artillery into position to do any service, that we could not hope to capture the works by regular assault. The only course left was to make a reconnoissance of the enemy's line to discover its weak points. As I had no engineer officer, I was obliged to make it alone on foot, and sometimes on my knees, and it occupied nearly two hours. I then determined to make an attack by throwing forward heavy bodies of skirmishers along my whole line at the same moment, to be supported during the brief period of the assault by artillery. When I ordered up the artillery, I found that the horses of General Brooks's division had been taken to

[1] General Butler retained Ames's division at Bermuda Hundred.

water, and over an hour was lost in consequence. Some time was also required to make it sure that the skirmishers of all the three divisions of Martindale, Brooks, and Hincks would advance simultaneously. Every moment until seven o'clock P. M. was spent in preparing to make the assault a success. When finally the assault was ordered, the whole force moved at the same moment and the success was perfect. In a short time all the works in front of us, including the rifle pits, were captured, the division of Brooks [white troops] taking ten guns, and the division of Hincks [colored troops] taking six guns. My loss was small, as some of the rebel guns were captured before they were discharged, being loaded with grape to sweep away my assaulting column which they were expecting to advance. It was nearly nine o'clock before the fight was over. We had taken the principal fortifications which the rebels had erected to protect what they considered the key to the Confederacy. The road beyond the works in front of General Hincks ran through a ravine between two hills which in the darkness appeared to be covered with forest, and which were full of the enemy's skirmishers. I had less than nine thousand infantry, and knew that reinforcements had been rushing in to Petersburg since two o'clock, and had every reason to believe that the enemy's force equaled or exceeded my own. I knew nothing of the country in front. My white

troops were exhausted by marching day and night, and by fighting most of the day in the excessive heat. My colored troops, who had fought bravely, were intoxicated by their success, and could hardly be kept in order.

Soon after the capture, Major-General Hancock, who ranked me, came up and informed me that he had the divisions of Gibbon and Birney near at hand, and that they were ready for any further movements which in my judgment should be made. I requested him to relieve my colored troops in the line I had carried, — which he did between eleven and two o'clock that night. As he ranked me, and by the rule of the service was in command as soon as he arrived on the field, he ordered an assault to be made by two divisions of the 2d Corps a little before daybreak the next morning. For some reason this order was not obeyed. Grant, who had watched the operations of June 15 from City Point, and who, with his engineers and Mr. Dana, the Assistant Secretary of War, visited the captured works on the morning of June 16, and had the operations of the 15th fully explained to him, expressed his gratification at what had been accomplished. Dana sent the following to Secretary Stanton : —

Heights South of Petersburg, *June* 16, 1864, 8 A. M.
(Via Jamestown Island, 12.30 P. M.)
(Received 4 P. M. 17th.)

The success of Smith last night was of the most important character. He carried these

heights, which were defended by works of the most formidable character, and this gives us perfect command of the city and railroad. The enemy still hold south of the city and west of the river, but their position of little comparative value. General Smith says the negro troops fought magnificently. His loss is in round numbers 750, of which 500 were among the negroes. He took 16 cannon.

C. A. DANA.[1]

HON. E. M. STANTON.

DOUTHAT'S LANDING, VA., *June* 16, 1864, 1 P. M.
(Received 11.45 P. M.)

After sending my dispatch of this morning from the heights southeast of Petersburg, I went over the conquered lines with General Grant and the engineer officers. The works are of the very strongest kind, more difficult even to take than was Missionary Ridge, at Chattanooga. The hardest fighting was done by the black troops. The forts they stormed were, I think, the worst of all. After the affair was over General Smith went to thank them and tell them he was proud of their courage and dash. He says they cannot be exceeded as soldiers, and that hereafter he will send them in a difficult place as readily as the best white troops. They captured six out of the sixteen cannons which he took. The prisoners he took were from Beauregard's command; some

[1] *War Records*, vol. 80, p. 21.

of them said they had just crossed the James above Drewry's Bluff. I do not think any of Lee's army had reached Petersburg when Smith stormed it. They seem to be there this morning, however, and to be making arrangements to hold the west side of the Appomattox; the town they cannot think of holding, for it lies directly under our guns. The weather continues splendid.

C. A. DANA.[1]

HON. E. M. STANTON, Secretary of War.

"On leaving the works with his staff, General Grant met General Meade, and called out, 'Well, Smith has taken a line of works stronger than anything we have seen this campaign. If it is a possible thing, I want an assault made at six o'clock this evening.'"[2]

On the 17th of June, 1864, at eleven A. M., General Grant, in a letter to General Halleck, after reciting what had been done during the 15th and 16th of June, including the capture of the fortifications by the 18th Corps, wrote: "Too much credit cannot be given to the troops and their commanders for the energy and fortitude displayed during the last five days. Day and night have been all the same, no delays being allowed on any account."[3]

My troops remained in front of Petersburg

[1] *War Records*, vol. 80, p. 21.

[2] *Statement* of Colonel Theodore Lyman of General Meade's Staff. Military Historical Society of Massachusetts.

[3] *War Records*, vol. 81, p. 116.

two days after the 15th of June, and then returned to Bermuda Hundred. On the 20th of June the 18th Corps was ordered to return to Petersburg on the 21st. While removing my troops away from General Butler's command, on the 21st of June, he wrote me an insulting letter; and some correspondence ensued between us, at the end of which I wrote a letter to General Grant, asking to be relieved from command under Butler (see p. 155). I had at the time no conversation with General Grant with reference to it; but I now find printed in the "War Records," in a dispatch from Dana to Stanton, dated July 1, 1864, the following: "Butler is pretty deep in controversial correspondence with 'Baldy' Smith, in which Grant says Butler is clearly in the wrong."[1]

In addition to what General Grant had seen of me at Chattanooga and in the West, he now knew how I had handled troops in the most exposed part of the field at Cold Harbor; he also knew how, by a careful reconnoissance and the use of skirmishers, I had captured the works at Petersburg. With this knowledge, on the 1st of July, 1864, General Grant wrote the following letter to General Halleck, to which reference has been made above (p. 2).

[1] *War Records*, vol. 80, p. 28.

HEADQUARTERS ARMIES OF THE UNITED STATES,
CITY POINT, VA., *July* 1, 1864.

MAJ.-GEN. H. W. HALLECK, Chief of Staff of the Army:

GENERAL, — Mr. Dana, Assistant Secretary of War, has just returned. He informs me that he called attention to the necessity of sending General Butler to another field of duty. Whilst I have no difficulty with General Butler, finding him always clear in his conception of orders and prompt to obey, yet there is a want of knowledge how to execute, and particularly a prejudice against him as a commander, that operates against his usefulness. I have feared that it might become necessary to separate him and General Smith. The latter is really one of the most efficient officers in service, readiest in expedients, and most skillful in the management of troops in action. I would dislike removing him from his present command unless it was to increase it, but, as I say, may have to do it yet, if General Butler remains. As an administrative officer General Butler has no superior. In taking charge of a department where there are no great battles to be fought, but a dissatisfied element to control, no one could manage it better than he.

If a command could be cut out such as Mr. Dana proposed, namely, Kentucky, Illinois, and Indiana, or if the Departments of the Missouri, Kansas, and the States of Illinois and Indiana, could be merged together and General Butler

put over it, I believe the good of the service would be subserved. I regret the necessity of asking for a change in commanders here, but General Butler, not being a soldier by education or experience, is in the hands of his subordinates in the execution of all operations military. I would feel strengthened with Smith, Franklin, or J. J. Reynolds commanding the right wing of this army. At the same time, as I have here stated, General Butler has always been prompt in his obedience to orders from me, and clear in his understanding of them. I would not, therefore, be willing to recommend his retirement. I send this by mail for consideration, but will telegraph if I think it absolutely necessary to make a change.

I am, general, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

U. S. GRANT, Lieutenant-General.[1]

July 3, General Halleck wrote to General Grant the reply which is printed on pp. 2–4.

This letter of General Halleck cannot be understood without reference to the exact situation, both political and military, at that time.

The campaign of General Grant in Virginia had resulted in an enormous loss of life and resources, and the army in front of Petersburg was not yet seriously threatening the safety of

[1] *War Records*, vol. 81, p. 558.

Lee's army. Jubal A. Early was advancing on Washington. The operations of General Sherman near Atlanta, although more successful, were still a subject of great anxiety. It was expected that a conscription calling for three hundred thousand or more men would be necessary to meet the terrible losses which had been suffered. A call for five hundred thousand men was actually made within three weeks of this date. The copperhead element, which pronounced the war a failure, was stronger than ever. A national election was approaching. The administration was filled with anxiety and alarm. It was the darkest period in the war. Swinton says :[1] —

"Now, so gloomy was the military outlook after the action on the Chickahominy, and to such a degree by consequence had the moral spring of the public mind become relaxed, that there was at this time great danger of a collapse of the war. The history of this conflict, truthfully written, will show this.[2] Had not success elsewhere come to brighten the horizon, it would have been difficult to have raised new forces to recruit the Army of the Potomac, which, shaken in its structure, its valor quenched in blood, and thousands of its ablest officers killed and wounded, was the Army of the Potomac no more."

[1] *Army of the Potomac*, p. 495.

[2] "The archives of the State Department, when one day made public, will show how deeply the Government was affected by the want of military success, and to what resolutions the Executive had in consequence come."

For these reasons, and at this critical time, General Halleck thought it would not be prudent to dismiss from the service a man who, although totally unfit for command in the field, would thus be made hostile and led to use all his "talent at political intrigue and his facilities for newspaper abuse" against the administration.

After receiving this letter, General Grant, whose military judgment was opposed to the half-way course suggested by General Halleck, sent by telegraph the peremptory request which is inserted on page 4, to the effect that I should be placed in command of the troops of the Department of Virginia and North Carolina, and that General Butler should be ordered to Fortress Monroe.[1] This was the judgment of Lieutenant-General Grant, the responsible head of the armies of the United States. The "War Records" show what happened in Washington. Secretary Stanton sends the following request to General Halleck:[2] —

WAR DEPARTMENT,
WASHINGTON CITY, *July* 7, 1864.

GENERAL HALLECK:

GENERAL, — Please bring your order as to Eighteenth Corps, with telegram and Grant's letter. The President wishes to see them.

Yours truly,
EDWIN M. STANTON.

[1] *War Records*, vol. 82, p. 31.
[2] *Ib.*, p. 59.

The draft of the General Order accompanying the letter and telegram of General Grant was as follows : [1] —

" General Orders, No. 225.

" I. The troops of the Department of North Carolina and Virginia serving with the Army of the Potomac in the field under Major-General Smith will constitute the Eighteenth Army Corps, and Maj. Gen. William F. Smith is assigned by the President to the command of the corps. Maj.-Gen. B. F. Butler will command the remainder of the troops in that department, having his headquarters at Fort Monroe."

On the same day, July 7, 1864, Order No. 225 was issued, and the only change made from the original draft was in striking out the words " by the President." [2]

In the mean time I was in the intrenchments at Petersburg. This order was issued without solicitation on my part. The water at Cold Harbor brought on a serious attack of dysentery, which was raging on the 15th of June, so that I could hardly sit on my horse. The condition of my head was such that I could not remain in the sun for two minutes without an intense headache. I had applied for leave of absence on account of my health. General Grant, July 2, 1864, wrote me the following personal letter : —

[1] *War Records*, vol. 82, p. 59.
[2] *Ib.*, p. 69.

HEADQUARTERS, CITY POINT, *July* 2, 1864.

MAJ.-GEN. W. F. SMITH:

Your application for leave of absence has just come to me. Unless it is absolutely necessary that you should leave at this time, I would much prefer not having you go. It will not be necessary for you to expose yourself in the hot sun, and if it should become necessary, I can temporarily attach General Humphreys to your command. U. S. GRANT.[1]

I immediately wrote the following letter to General Grant's Chief of Staff: —

HEADQUARTERS EIGHTEENTH ARMY CORPS,
July 2, 1864.

BRIGADIER-GENERAL RAWLINS, Chief of Staff, City Point:

There is a good deal of reorganization to be done in this command, and therefore I dare not take advantage of the general's kindness and must stick it out as long as possible. I hope for a change of weather. Please mention this to General Grant. As soon as the order is out I shall come down and have a talk with you on what I consider a question of vital moment to the country, and in these questions personal hostility I don't think ever interferes with my judgment.

WM. F. SMITH.[2]

[1] *War Records*, vol. 81, p. 594. [2] *Ib.*, p. 595.

On the same day I wrote General Grant the following letter : —

SATURDAY MORNING, *July* 2, 1864.

LIEUT.-GEN. U. S. GRANT, Commanding Armies of the United States :

GENERAL, — In acknowledging your dispatch with reference to my leave, I consider it due to you, who have been so kind to me, and to myself who has never had anything but the warmest wish for your success and for the prosperous termination of this war, to render some explanation. One of my troubles, that of my head, has three times driven me from a southern climate, and I really feel quite helpless here, unable to go out at all during the heat of the day even to visit my lines, and therefore I do not do the duty of a corps commander as I think it should be done. I have during this war held my health and my life at the service of the country when I thought I was doing any good, and as I stand now, unfortunately, and as I think I can say with the clearest conscience, from no fault of my own, I have deemed that some other with more ambition and no hostilities could better serve the country here in my place ; therefore, I was in no wise called upon to risk a permanent disability by remaining here. I wish to say to you, unofficially, that from the time I joined the Department of Virginia until the campaign terminated disgracefully, I gave to the work the utmost

energies of mind and body. Then I wanted to be where I could be useful, and, thinking the more troops there were in this department, the more blunders and murders would be committed, I went gladly to the Army of the Potomac with the most hearty good-will and intentions. In looking back over the sneers and false charges and the snubbings I received there I only wonder, General, at my own moderation.[1] I then came back, thinking that your presence here would prevent blunders, and that I could once more be useful. Two letters have been written to me which I think any gentleman would be ashamed to acknowledge as emanating from him, and for which there was not even the shadow of an excuse. This has induced me to believe that some one else would be of far more service here than I am. And as my only ambition is to be of service, I determined to present the just plea of my health to remove one of the obstacles to harmony in this army, and, that, general, if you will look closely into the campaign, you will find to be one of the causes of want of success, when you needed and expected it. In conclusion, general, I am willing to do anything and endure anything which will be of service to the country or yourself. Now I am through with the per-

[1] To show that this feeling towards General Meade was not confined to me but was shared by the other officers high in command, I refer to a letter of C. A. Dana to Secretary Stanton dated July 7. See Appendix No. 4.

sonal, and I want simply to call your attention to the fact that no man since the Revolution has had a tithe of the responsibility which now rests on your shoulders, and to ask you how you can place a man in command of two army corps, who is as helpless as a child on the field of battle and as visionary as an opium eater in council, and that, too, when you have such men as Franklin and Wright available to help you, to make you famous for all time, and our country great and free beyond all other nations of the world. Think of it, my dear general, and let your good sense and not your heart decide questions of this kind.

WM. F. SMITH.[1]

On the 8th of July, General Rawlins wrote that as there was to be no movement for a week or ten days, I might have leave of absence during that time.[2] On the 9th of July I notified Major-General Butler that I should avail myself of the leave of absence granted for ten days.[3]

It thus appears that when I left for New York I had served under General Grant eight months and seventeen days. For the service I rendered in the West in fighting, consulting, advising, and making plans for battles, General Grant had found no words of commendation too strong.

[1] *War Records*, vol. 81, p. 595.
[2] *Ib.*, vol. 82, p. 88.
[3] *Ib.*, p. 119.

When, after nearly twenty days' continuous fighting in General Butler's department, which resulted in failure, General Grant had requested an investigation, intimating a possibility that my obstinacy might have contributed to the disaster, Generals Meigs and Barnard, after careful investigation, reported that "General Butler is satisfied with the ability and aid of General Smith," and suggested that I should be put in "command untrammeled, and General Butler remanded to the administrative duties of the department in which he has shown great ability."

I was then put in command of the Movable Column and ordered to Cold Harbor. On my return, I was sent to capture Petersburg. After my success there, which General Grant understood thoroughly, as he went over the field on the 16th of June, and had full explanations, he described me as "really one of the most efficient officers in the service, readiest in expedients, and most skillful in the management of troops in action," and said that he should "dislike removing me from my present command unless it was to increase it." He also insisted upon having me placed in command of the troops of the Department of Virginia and North Carolina. He seemed also to have towards me the most friendly feelings. When I asked for leave of absence on account of my health, he wrote me a friendly personal letter offering the aid of General Humphreys to save me from exposure to the sun.

As to General Butler, I knew that I had incurred his enmity by asking to be relieved from service under him on the 21st of June; but I also knew that I had, while with his command, served faithfully to the best of my ability, and I had the strongest assurances from him that he knew that I had so served. Besides his statement to Generals Meigs and Barnard, incorporated in their letter of May 24, that he was satisfied with my aid and ability, he had, on the 21st of June, after the assault upon Petersburg, addressed me in a letter as follows: "To so meritorious and able officer as yourself, and to one towards whom the sincerest personal friendship and the highest respect concur in my mind."[1] I had so conducted myself that General Weitzel, whose candor, sincerity, and courage were never questioned, who was in command of one of the divisions under me from the 4th of May until after the battle at Drewry's Bluff, who was subsequently made General Butler's chief engineer (in order, as he now says, to settle differences between General Gillmore and myself), who knew better than any one else all my operations from the 4th to the 26th of May, who was a competent judge of them, and who would have known if there had been the slightest obstruction on my part or want of cordial coöperation in carrying out the plan of the campaign, regarded General Butler as my best friend. General Weitzel was with General Butler in New Orleans,

[1] *War Records*, vol. 81, p. 299.

and was upon most intimate terms with him, and his letter of June 25, inserted upon page 48, indignantly denying, upon the authority of General Butler himself, that General Butler had anything to do with my removal, and declaring that General Butler was my best friend, shows conclusively that neither he nor General Butler, to his knowledge, had any cause of complaint against me.

When I left for home on the 10th of July, 1864, I had, therefore, every reason to be satisfied with my record, and to believe that I had the esteem and confidence of the Lieutenant-General Commanding, and that my conduct as commander of the 18th Corps under General Butler was open to no criticism. I believed, too, that I could render some service in the new and important command to which I had been assigned by the President of the United States. On my return, on the 19th of July, I learned from General Grant that I was to be relieved, and that the command was not to be assigned to General Franklin or General Reynolds, who had been named by General Grant as men in whom he should have confidence, but that General Butler, who had been displaced by President Lincoln within two weeks, because General Grant had declared him incompetent, was by the act of General Grant to be restored to full command, and that that command was to be enlarged by the addition of the 19th Corps.

CHAPTER IV.

GENERAL BUTLER MOVES UPON GENERAL GRANT, AND SECURES AT ONCE MY REMOVAL AND HIS RESTORATION TO COMMAND.

It now appears that as soon as General Butler learned of the existence of Order No. 225 he began to act. And I cannot show what he did more plainly than by quoting from the "War Records."[1]

H'dq'rs Dept. of Virginia and North Carolina,
In the Field, *July* 9, 1864.

Lieutenant-Colonel Comstock, City Point:
Has General Grant gone to the front to-day, or is he at his headquarters?

G. Weitzel,
Brigadier-General and Acting Chief of Staff.

July 9, 1864.

Senior Staff Officer at H'dq'rs, City Point:
Has General Grant gone to the front?

B. F. Butler, Major-General.

[1] *War Records*, vol. 82, p. 114.

HEADQUARTERS ARMY, *July* 9, 1864.

MAJOR-GENERAL BUTLER:

Lieutenant-General Grant desires me to say that he will be at City Point during the day.

C. B. COMSTOCK,
Lieutenant-Colonel and Aide-de-Camp.

H'DQ'RS DEPT. OF VIRGINIA AND NORTH CAROLINA,
IN THE FIELD, *July* 9, 1864.

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL FULLER,
Chief Quartermaster, Bermuda Hundred:

Send a steamer at once to Point of Rocks to take me to City Point.

BENJ. F. BUTLER,
Major-General Commanding.

July 9, 1864, 6 P. M.

COLONEL SHAFFER:

Letter received. Do not trouble yourself about the order. It is all right now and better than if it had not been disturbed.

BENJ. F. BUTLER,
Maj.-Gen. Comdg. all the Troops of the Dept. of Va. and N. C.[1]

The last telegram, in which General Butler describes himself as "Maj.-Gen. Comdg. all the Troops of the Dept. of Va. and N. C.," and his direction to Colonel Shaffer, "Do not trouble yourself about the order," meaning obviously the

[1] See Appendix No. 6.

Order No. 225, shows that, in a few hours, or probably in a few minutes, by some influence, General Butler had induced General Grant to undo the action of the President and Secretary of War, and to continue to intrust the lives of thousands of soldiers to the control of a man whom within a week they had all deliberately declared incompetent to command in the field.

General Grant must have anticipated some surprise at Washington at this extraordinary action, and accordingly the next day he sent the following telegram:[1] —

CITY POINT, VA., *July* 10, 1864, 1.30 P. M.
(Received 8.40 P. M.)

MAJ.-GEN. H. W. HALLECK, Chief of Staff:

General Orders, No. 225, of July 7, 1864, would take the Eighteenth Corps from the Department of Virginia and North Carolina, and leave it a separate command, thus giving a third army in the field. As the Tenth Corps is also serving here, I would not desire this change made, but simply want General Smith assigned to the command of the Eighteenth Corps, and if there is no objection to a brigadier-general holding such a position, General W. T. H. Brooks to the command of the Tenth Corps, leaving both these corps in the department as before, the headquarters of which is at Fortress Monroe. When the Nineteenth Corps arrives, I will add it to the

[1] *War Records*, vol. 82, p. 122.

same department. I will take the liberty of suspending this order until I hear again. I will ask to have Gen. Franklin assigned to the active command in the field, *under General Butler's orders*,[1] as soon as he is fit for duty.

U. S. GRANT, Lieutenant-General.

As the only parts of this telegram which General Grant ever acted upon were those retaining General Butler in command of the department, and enlarging it by the addition of the 19th Corps, and as neither General Franklin nor I was ever placed in command of the department, it is perhaps not unreasonable to suggest that this telegram was intended to mitigate the surprise which General Grant's sudden change of front must have occasioned at Washington.

General Butler was retained in command. The bloody but useless fight on the north of the James River, September 29, and the ridiculous explosion of the powder-boat and the failure at Fort Fisher followed, and then, after General Grant's position had been strengthened by the success of Sherman at Savannah and by that of General Thomas at Nashville, General Butler was relieved from command and sent to Lowell, because he was an unsafe commander, and because the administration of his department was objectionable.[2] General Grant knew all this on

[1] The italics are mine.

[2] See General Grant's letter of Jan. 4, 1865, *ante*, p. 6.

the 9th of July, 1864, as well as on the 4th of January, 1865. The question now to be answered is by what means and by what influence General Butler compelled General Grant to retain him in power and to increase his command.

In the first place, it must be considered that General Grant took the whole responsibility, after a single brief interview. It is not possible, therefore, that general political considerations, which had not controlled President Lincoln, should have influenced General Grant. It is also clear that nothing I might have done or failed to do could have led General Grant to retain General Butler, because in his letter of July 1, in which General Grant had declared General Butler to be incompetent to command, he had mentioned Generals Franklin and Reynolds, as well as myself, as officers upon whom he could rely with confidence. My conduct might have led to the withdrawal of my name, but why pass over Generals Franklin and Reynolds?

My own personal grievance naturally led to the utmost inquiry on my part and that of my friends. If I had been relieved on the 21st of June as I requested, or had I been relieved on account of my health on the 2d of July, as I again requested, I should have had no cause for complaint. But after both of those letters had been written, I had, at General Grant's request, been promoted to a separate command, and made conspicuous before the country, only to be at once

relieved in a form which was disgraceful. A reason was earnestly sought for not only by me, but by my friends, without solicitation on my part. The only reason given me by General Grant at our first interview was that I had severely criticised General Meade, and had instigated an attack upon General Hancock in the "New York Tribune." This was highly absurd. In view of my relations to General Grant, having been constantly with him from October 23, 1863, until he brought me with him in his private car to Washington, and having been encouraged to give my opinions on all questions affecting the war, I should have failed in my duty if I had not criticised the battle of Cold Harbor. General Sherman, in his private congratulatory letter to General Grant on his promotion to the rank of Lieutenant-General, March 10, 1864, says, with reference to his success, "My only points of doubt were as to your knowledge of grand strategy and of books of science and history; but I confess your common sense seems to have supplied all this." This common sense was shown in his readiness to receive suggestions from any he believed competent to make them, and he knew that any criticism I might make would be made in good faith. As to the letter in the "New York Tribune" of June 27, 1864, I knew nothing of it until after it was published. It was unjust to General Hancock, and I wrote a note to him stating the fact and regretting its

publication.[1] But General Grant had ordered the pass of Mr. Kent, the writer of the article, to be revoked July 2, and he had disappeared four days before General Grant requested my promotion.[2] General Hancock, in his letter of complaint, July 1, 1864,[3] describes the article "as purporting to have been written at the headquarters of General Butler." I know General Hancock never for a moment suspected me of writing the letter, as we continued friends to the end of his life. I am sure General Grant, even without the denial which I made at once, did not believe that I had anything to do with it, and his reference to it only convinced me that General Butler had attempted to use it against me. As General Butler was the only man suspected of instigating the letter, his attempt to put it upon me suggests the old cry of "stop thief" by the thief (see pp. 166 *et seq.*). General Grant did not mention my conduct at Petersburg as the cause of my removal. If he had, I should at once have demanded an investigation, and should have been entitled to it.

As it was obvious that the reasons given by General Grant were not sufficient either for relieving me or for retaining an incompetent general, my friends, on their own part, made inquiries. Among others General James H. Wilson,

[1] *War Records*, vol. 82, p. 89.
[2] *Ib.*, vol. 81, p. 583.
[3] *Ib.*, p. 567.

the distinguished officer of cavalry, and for two years on the personal staff of General Grant, and very intimate with him at that time, wrote me as follows: "The day you left [July 19] I had quite a long and confidential conversation with the general, during which I referred to your case, expressing my surprise and regret at the order [the order relieving me] which had been issued; to which he replied, 'No man in the army, not General Smith himself, regrets it more than I do; for no man appreciates the general's great abilities better than I do, or is more anxious to use them in this war.'" General Wilson then added: "I have talked with officers of every grade and have heard nothing but regret expressed that you should have been taken away, though nobody knows the cause. Your character, reputation, and good name are in no way affected, but are as fair as ever." General Weitzel, the chief engineer of General Butler, an excellent officer, who might have done good service and won a name at Fort Fisher had not General Butler concealed from him instructions which General Grant had in writing instructed General Butler to give him, wrote to me as follows within a week after I was relieved: —

July 25, 1864.

My dear General, — Captain Hill came to see me yesterday and told me of the feeling there was in your command at your departure, and in

the course of a private conversation with me said, "Now could n't we get General Smith back, if he would agree to apologize to General Butler?" He said this in the most perfect innocence and with the best intention in the world. I asked him at once, "Why, do you suppose that General Smith has been relieved at General Butler's request, or through him?" He said, "Yes, we all think so, and we believe General Smith thinks so." I at once told him that if this were so, General Butler had exerted influence entirely opposite to that from which I supposed he would. Because I know that General Butler was the best friend to you in the world. Frequently he peremptorily ordered things that you applied for to be given when the chiefs of his staff departments opposed it. The only exception was in case of Lieutenant Michie, and he was not sent because I had been knocked over by a sun-stroke and afterwards laid out by chills and fever; and Lieutenant M. was performing my active duty. General Butler was absent when Hill was here. As soon as he returned I went into his tent and asked him, "Did you have anything at all to do with having General Smith removed?" He said promptly, "No."

Your orders came from an entirely different quarter, or General Butler must have deceived me, which I do not believe. In haste,

Yours truly, G. Weitzel, Brig.-Gen.

Maj.-Gen. Wm. F. Smith, U. S. Volunteers,
New York City.

General Butler now, in his book, claims the credit of having secured my removal. General Butler's account of the Order No. 225, placing me in command of the 18th Corps, in his book (p. 695), is as follows: "Smith went to Washington without the leave of his commanding general, and there saw Senator Foote, of Vermont, and used influence and what statements I know not with the War Department to get an order from the President giving him command of the Eighteenth Corps, which he then had, having taken it out in fact from under my command. All this was done through Major-General Halleck, chief of staff, without any notice to me. . . . Upon receiving the order, I called upon General Grant with it, and showed it to him, and asked him if this was his act and his desire. . . . He replied, 'But I don't want this.'" General Butler then writes, "I said that his [Smith's] conduct in disobeying my order and that of General Grant to make the attack on Petersburg was not only sufficient to cause his removal, but had caused a very great disaster to the country, . . . and appealed to his [Grant's] justice whether such an act could be done against me upon the representation of such a man." He goes on to say that General Grant then said that "this was not what he wanted at all, and that he would remedy it." He says that he then left, and General Grant soon after revoked the Order No. 225, relieved me, and ordered the 19th Corps to General

Butler's command. The only ground on which General Butler put his claim for my removal was my alleged disobedience of orders at Petersburg I suppose General Butler refers to an order sent me at midnight, June 15 and 16, to push on to the Appomattox, and received by me after General Hancock had arrived on the field. General Butler's statements as to what I had done are pure fiction. I did not go to Washington with or without leave; I did not communicate with Senator Foote, or with Halleck, or with any one else in Washington with reference to it. I never spoke to General Halleck in my life. I was every day in the intrenchments at Petersburg or at Bermuda Hundred. I never, while in the army, in any way directly or indirectly sought promotion except by endeavoring at all times to do my duty. As the reader knows from the Records which I have produced, the Order No. 225 was issued upon the emphatic and repeated request of General Grant, and after a consultation between President Lincoln, Secretary Stanton, and General Halleck. If General Grant gave General Butler to understand that he did not want me placed in command and General Butler relieved, and was influenced to revoke the order by General Butler's statements as to my character as an officer, which he knew a thousand times better than General Butler did, he was guilty of a degree of duplicity and weak-

ness which his worst enemy would not charge him with.[1]

In the absence of any other explanation of General Grant's sudden change in his relations to General Butler and to me, and from statements made to me at his headquarters, and from my knowledge of what General Grant had done in General Butler's presence, I was convinced that General Butler had used his knowledge of the fact that General Grant, under the pressure of the great burden which he was carrying, had temporarily become the victim of a habit which had at one time disqualified him for command, to force him to act against his judgment and inclination. I stated that conclusion in a private letter to Senator Foote, of Vermont, written July 30, 1864, eleven days after I was relieved. That letter was not intended for publication, but, many years after, when it was found among the papers of Senator Foote after his decease, it was published without my knowledge or consent, and General Butler has used it as the basis of an attack upon me. This letter is given in the appendix No. 1 to this volume. I regretted the publication of the letter, but my opinion has never changed, and the subsequent extraordinary

[1] On page 715 of his book, General Butler says that I sought from Grant the command of the Army of the Potomac in place of General Meade. Probably General Butler knew that General Grant had in the past expressed a determination to place me in that command, and that Secretary Stanton favored the plan; but the statement that I sought the command is untrue.

relations between General Grant and General Butler, and the causes which led to them, have convinced me that my opinion was correct.[1]

There was not at that time the slightest reason for supposing that my conduct at Petersburg was even the pretended cause of my being relieved. If my conduct there was the real cause, why did both Generals Grant and Butler conceal it from me and all others? Why did General Butler deny to General Weitzel that he had anything to do with my being relieved? Why did General Grant give no reason to General Wilson, and give none to me, except what he knew to be absurd?

It becomes necessary that I should state fully the reasons which influenced me in coming to the conclusion which was stated in the Foote letter. General Grant's habits before the war and in the early part of it were well known. My relations with General Rawlins were intimate and friendly. I knew then, what the world now knows from the published letter of General Rawlins to General Grant dated June 6, 1863, that General Grant had pledged his honor to General Rawlins, that he would drink no more during the war.[2] I also knew that on June 29, 1864, he

[1] A recent letter from General Isaac J. Wistar confirms the theory stated in my letter, and shows what sort of explanations were at the time confidentially given at the War Department for General Grant's sudden change of front. See Appendix No. 8.

[2] Appendix No. 2.

had drunk to excess in the presence of General Butler. I had other reasons for believing that he was falling into his old habit. Knowing General Rawlins' great influence, and the vast interests at stake at that very critical period, I determined after deliberate reflection to give him notice of what I had seen. I did so, and received in reply the following letter : —

HEADQUARTERS ARMIES OF THE UNITED STATES,
CITY POINT, VA., *June* 30, 1864.

DEAR GENERAL, — Your kind note of this date, in regard to General Grant while at your headquarters yesterday, is received. I am thankful to you for your friendly forethought and the interest you manifested in his behalf. Yet 't is only what one knowing your friendship for him might have expected. Being thus advised of the slippery ground he is on, I shall not fail to use my utmost endeavors to stay him from falling. Your application for a leave of absence will be presented to the General for his favorable consideration. I can assure you, however, he will be loath to part with you from the field, even for a few days.

Your friend,

JNO. A. RAWLINS.

But General Butler, in his book, denies that he was present or saw General Grant drink on June 29, 1864. I find in a home letter, written

June 29, 1864, 11.30 P. M., the following clause: "To-day Generals Grant and Butler were here and spent some time." What value can be attached to any statement made upon the strength of General Butler's memory will be hereafter considered. General Butler's subsequent relations to General Grant furnish evidence of his methods in dealing with him. They are said to be characteristic methods. Even after General Butler had been relieved, in January, 1865, and sent to Lowell, he wrote a note to General Rawlins which was evidently intended for General Grant. After declaring that General Grant was hated by the regular army, and complaining of certain correspondents at General Grant's headquarters, he wrote: "Now, my dear Rawlins, look after those stupid fellows a little or they will do injury to their chief. They have already circulated a story that General Grant has always been opposed to me, and that I have been thrust upon him for political reasons, so, if possible, to get a personal issue between me and the General. *It will be his fault if that issue comes, not mine.*"[1] This letter shows that General Butler had learned to believe that his threat could influence General Grant.

A few years later General Butler prepared a savage attack upon General Grant, of which he showed me the proof-sheets, and in which he invited me to join. I declined. Short passages

[1] *Butler's Book*, Appendix, No. 146. The italics are mine.

from this attack were at the time published in the newspapers. Subsequently a synopsis of the pamphlet was prepared to be sent by the Associated Press throughout the country. Thereupon General Grant sent for General Butler, peace was made, the pamphlet was not published, and General Butler became one of General Grant's most earnest supporters in Congress, and is said to have controlled the distribution of the federal offices in Massachusetts; and General Grant thereafter spoke more mildly of General Butler's faults.

I made only one more effort to obtain from General Grant the reasons for his relieving me. This was in a letter dated June 3, 1865. I insert the letter and General Grant's reply through General Comstock.

11 E. 15TH ST., N. Y. CITY, *June* 3, 1865.

GENERAL, — I have learned since I saw you in Washington that you had said that I was relieved from the command of the 18th Army Corps last July, because I was getting up a cabal against you and was intriguing to get you deposed from your command.

I know not if I have been correctly informed (as in your talk with me at the time, there was no hint of any such thing), and so I am of course without information as to what stories may have been carried to you, but I deem it due to myself (in the full belief that you will give

credence to my positive statements), to say that up to the time I was relieved from command, there was no one in the service who more heartily wished for your success.

To an application of mine to be relieved from duty where I then was, you replied by asking for an advancement in position, and it would have been the blackest treachery in me to have even entertained a thought of engaging in any cabal against you — setting aside the fact that to no other one could I have looked for so high an estimate of myself as you had expressed.

On my return from a short leave, when I certainly had committed no fault, I found that something had determined you not to relieve me, as I had formerly requested, but to remove me in disgrace.

To prove that I attributed it all at that time to the influence of General Butler, I will say that the night I spent at my headquarters, General Martindale assured me that he would make everything right in two hours if I would consent to serve under General Butler as before. To this I replied that I had no commission that was worth such a price. Since my removal I make no pretensions to friendly feelings, but I am extremely anxious that you should not carry in your mind any well-founded suspicions that I ever acted in a deceitful manner with reference to you or any other person in the world.

I should not have taken up your time on

this subject now for fear of my motives being misconstrued, but in a conversation with General Wilson yesterday on this matter he advised this course, and I write only with the single purpose of disabusing your mind on one point and doing justice to my own sense of honor.

WM. F. SMITH.

LT.-GEN. U. S. GRANT.

HEADQUARTERS ARMIES OF THE UNITED STATES,
June 4, 1865.

GENERAL, — General Grant has received your letter, and wishes me to say that he has never accused you of being in a cabal for his displacement, and also in reference to your being relieved, that it came from the impossibility of your getting along with General Butler; of the two, you being the junior.

Very truly yours,

C. B. COMSTOCK.

There was no hint that any conduct of mine at Petersburg had anything to do with my removal, and I never heard such a suggestion until the publication of Butler's book in 1892.

The statement made in the letter of General Comstock that I was General Butler's junior was not true. By Order No. 225, President Lincoln had made my command independent of General Butler. The reason given by General Grant was valid only on the assumption *that General*

Grant was forced to restore General Butler to full command. What occurred in that short conversation at City Point, in that afternoon of July 9, 1864, which compelled General Grant to restore General Butler to command, the parties to the conversation had not then disclosed.

CHAPTER V.

GENERAL GRANT'S SUBSEQUENT MISREPRESENTATIONS OF MY CONDUCT AT THE ASSAULT ON PETERSBURG, JUNE 15, 1864, WITH A TRUE ACCOUNT OF THAT ASSAULT AS SHOWN BY THE RECENTLY PUBLISHED "WAR RECORDS."

I AM now satisfied that my letter to Senator Foote did not state all the influences which General Butler used to control General Grant. In order to understand those influences it is necessary to show what General Grant and General Butler did and failed to do with reference to Petersburg, and how they must have felt about it on the 9th of July, 1864, and what have since been their relations. This involves a review of a part of the campaign of 1864. A letter in the "War Records"[1] shows the relation of the two generals immediately after Butler's restoration to command.

On June 23, 1865, General Grant published his General Report of the war, and in it totally misrepresented the facts as to the attack on Petersburg, June 15, 1864, presenting them in such a way as to charge me with inefficiency and failure to do my duty, and to put upon me the

[1] Vol. 82, p. 247.

whole responsibility for the failure to capture Petersburg at that time.[1] I read the report with astonishment, as up to that time I had supposed that all connected with the army had regarded the capture of the fortifications as a successful and even brilliant achievement. I could not then get at the orders, dispatches, and reports showing the operations of June 15, but within the last two months I have received the proof-sheets of the "War Records" covering the period, which show conclusively that nearly every statement in General Grant's report referring to Petersburg is untrue.

I wrote, soon after the publication of the report, to General Hincks, who commanded the division of colored troops on June 15. His reply, so far as it relates to the report, was as follows: —

BOSTON, *Dec.* 23, 1865.

MY DEAR GENERAL, — I am in receipt of your note and fully sympathize with your expressed feelings in regard to so much of General Grant's report as refers to our movements before Petersburg. *I think he must have been purposely or maliciously misinformed as to the movements* both of Hancock and his corps. My first impression on reading the report was that my duty required me to write a note of correction to General Grant, asking him to do

[1] *War Records*, vol. 67, p. 25.

justice to you, but on reflection I concluded to await some communication from you.

Even General Butler wrote a letter to Dr. Suckley, the medical director of the 18th Army Corps, which contained the following clause: "I think I can aid General Smith in defending himself against an injustice done him as to his failure to take Petersburg."

At the suggestion of Dr. Suckley I wrote to General Butler for any papers which would throw light on the events of that attack. I received the following reply: —

WASHINGTON, *March* 14, 1866.

MY DEAR GENERAL, — Inclosed please find all the telegrams and other signal communications which I find that are called for by your note. I trust they will be of service to you in setting right a point of history in relation to your attack on Petersburg which has been misrepresented.

Yours truly,

BENJ. F. BUTLER.

The telegrams and other communications inclosed in the letter were only a small part of those in the "War Records."

General Grant's report as to my attack on the fortifications of Petersburg is as follows: [1] —

[1] *War Records*, vol. 67, p. 25.

"I proceeded by a steamer to Bermuda Hundred to give the necessary orders for the immediate capture of Petersburg. The instructions to General Butler were verbal, and were for him to send General Smith immediately that night with all the troops he could give him without sacrificing the position he then held. I told him that I would return at once to the Army of the Potomac, hasten its crossing, and throw it forward to Petersburg by divisions as rapidly as it could be done, that we could reinforce our armies more rapidly there than the enemy could bring troops against us. General Smith got off as directed, and confronted the enemy's pickets near Petersburg before daylight next morning, but, for some reason that I have never been able to satisfactorily understand, did not get ready to assault his main lines until near sundown. Then, with a part of his command only, he made the assault and carried the lines northeast of Petersburg from the Appomattox River for a distance of over 2½ miles, capturing 15 pieces of artillery and 300 prisoners. This was about 7 P. M. Between the line thus captured and Petersburg there were no other works, and there was no evidence that the enemy had reinforced Petersburg with a single brigade from any source. The night was clear, the moon shining brightly and favorable to further operations. General Hancock, with two divisions of the Second Corps, reached General Smith just after dark

and offered the service of these troops as he [Smith] might wish, waiving rank to the named commander, who he naturally supposed knew best the position of affairs and what to do with the troops. But instead of taking these troops and pushing at once into Petersburg, he requested General Hancock to relieve a part of his line in the captured works, which was done before midnight."

The material statements in the report are as follows: (1) That I got off as directed on the night of the 14th of June and confronted the enemy's pickets near Petersburg before daylight the next morning. (2) That I assaulted with a part of my command only. (3) That at the time I captured the fortifications there was no evidence that Petersburg was reinforced by a single brigade. (4) That General Hancock reached me soon after dark and waived his rank in my favor.

General Grant in his Memoirs[1] modifies the statement by inserting the fact that I did encounter a rebel force intrenched between City Point and Petersburg and did carry the position, and did not get away from that point until daylight. He also adds (1) that I arrived in front of the enemy's lines early in the forenoon and spent the day in reconnoitring what appeared to be empty works; (2) *that I assaulted with colored troops only.*

[1] *Personal Memoirs of General Grant*, vol. ii. pp. 294, 295.

The records of orders, telegrams, and reports show beyond question that each of the statements which I have taken from his report and book is a gross misrepresentation. To prove this I propose to give an accurate history of the attack on Petersburg, and the capture of the principal fortifications on the 15th of June, as it appears from the "War Records."

The Number of Troops.

When I left Bermuda Hundred for Cold Harbor I had about 16,000 infantry.[1] After the forced march in excessively hot weather, from White House to Cold Harbor by way of New Castle, and the days of fighting in the most exposed part of the field at Cold Harbor, the number was reduced to 10,324 men.[2] From the time of that count we lay in the intrenchments under fire for nine days, and then made a forced march to White House. We lost many officers and men in the intrenchments, and some fell out, and some stragglers returned. On arriving at Bermuda Hundred I had three divisions, commanded respectively by Generals Brooks, Martindale, and Ames. General Ames's division, or the most of it, was taken from me, and filled the place of Kautz's cavalry in defending Bermuda Hundred, and General Hincks's division of colored troops, about 3,747 in all, was

[1] *War Records*, vol. 67, p. 998. [2] *Ib.*, p. 90.

added to my command.[1] As General Kautz's cavalry of from 2,500 to 3,000 went practically upon a separate expedition to turn the works south of the Norfolk and Petersburg Railroad, I had no aid from him for the attack. I had, therefore, less than 10,000 infantry, including about 3,747 raw colored troops, some of whom were apparently not properly drilled.[2] On the 16th of June, after fighting and marching nearly all day in the hot sun on the 15th, and after the assault and capture of the works, I had about 8,000 effective men.[3] The material part of the report was as follows: "I have in the neighborhood of 8,000 men for an attack, in good fighting trim and good spirits, and will be ready to make an attack in my front at any hour which may be indicated by your order."

General Butler, in an address before the triennial reunion of the Society of the Army of the James at the Union League Club Theatre, New York, Wednesday, October 21, 1874, confirms this. He said: "17,000 picked men, the flower of our army, sailed on that errand [to Cold Harbor], of which less than 11,000 returned fit for duty. . . . As soon as the force dispatched to the aid of the Army of the Potomac had returned, a column of 10,000 men went against

[1] *War Records*, vol. 80, p. 721.

[2] See Hincks's Report, *War Records*, vol. 80, p. 723.

[3] Report to General Meade, *War Records*, vol. 81, p. 113.

Petersburg."[1] General Grant, on the 11th of June, describes the 18th Corps as having 15,300 men.[2] But this undoubtedly referred to the names on the rolls and not to the men fit for duty.

It is proper to state here that I was led to expect that all the divisions which I had brought from Cold Harbor would take part in the attack on Petersburg. At midnight on the 15th I sent a dispatch to General Butler[3] stating that General Ames had not arrived. This shows that I expected him. I now find in the "Records"[4] that General Butler, as early as 8.40 P. M. on the 14th, had promised General Terry that, on his sending General Kautz, he should "arrange to leave a part of Smith's infantry as a reserve." He took General Devens's division, which General Ames was then commanding. General Butler had a right to do this, and make Bermuda Hundred more safe, but that he should have concealed it from me, and sent me to capture Petersburg with a force of veterans only two thirds as large as I expected, illustrates the workings of his mind. The same habit led him to conceal from General Weitzel the instructions which General Grant had carefully prepared for the attack on Fort Fisher. He also concealed

[1] In *Butler's Book*, p. 687, the author states that I had about 18,000 effective men. But he had a case to work out when he wrote it, and for him the exaggeration was moderate.

[2] *War Records*, vol. 69, p. 754.

[3] *Ib.*, vol. 81, p. 83.

[4] *Ib.*, vol. 81, p. 40; Shaffer to Terry.

from General Grant the withdrawal of Ames's division, sending him a dispatch on June 15, that I had at least 15,000 men, besides cavalry and four batteries of artillery.[1]

No one under General Butler could tell on what ground he was treading.

As no criticisms have been made upon the movement of my troops from Cold Harbor, I shall begin my narrative of events at the time of our arrival at Bermuda Hundred. This was about sunset on the 14th. A part of my troops had then arrived, and others, being delayed for lack of transportation, continued to come until late into the night. I was then orally informed by General Butler, for the first time, that I was to move my troops for an attack on Petersburg at daybreak, and that I was to have General Kautz's cavalry and the colored division under General Hincks in addition to the other divisions I had brought from Cold Harbor. No preparations had been made by General Butler, although General Grant's order of June 11, issued without my knowledge,[2] had directed him to prepare to start on the arrival of the 18th Corps. It was impossible to get ready to start before daybreak, and the orders were given accordingly. General Hincks and General Kautz did not receive their orders until about nine o'clock in the evening of the 14th. The first order was given by

[1] *War Records*, vol. 81, p. 73.
[2] *Ib.*, vol. 69, p. 755.

General Butler's chief of staff to General Terry, June 14, at 8.50 P. M. It was as follows: —

GENERAL BUTLER'S HEADQUARTERS,
June 14, 1864, 8.50 P. M.

GENERAL TERRY, — It will be necessary to take General Kautz and 3,000 cavalry on expedition under Smith to-night. We will arrange to leave part of Smith's infantry as a reserve.[1] I will detain your aide until everything is settled so that he can report fully to you. The artillery ordered can march to road leading to pontoon bridge and there await troops. There will be a fire on the road. Troops march at 2 o'clock.

J. W. SHAFFER,
Colonel and Chief of Staff.[2]

The order to General Hincks was signed by General Butler himself. It is as follows: —

H'DQ'RS DEPT. OF VIRGINIA AND NORTH CAROLINA,
IN THE FIELD, *June* 14, 1864.

GENERAL HINCKS, — You will report with your force in such position that you will be ready to move with General Smith just before daybreak. You will report personally to him at Broadway at 2 A. M. precisely. I think he will not keep you waiting; and General Smith will march on the City Point Road.

BENJ. F. BUTLER,
Major-General Commanding.[3]

[1] General Ames's division, or most of it, was retained.
[2] *War Records*, vol. 81, p. 40. [3] *Ib.*, p. 43.

I copy these orders in full because General Grant states in his report that we got off in the night and confronted the enemy's pickets near Petersburg before daybreak the next morning. This record shows that the plan was to start from Broadway, which was at the end of the pontoon bridge across the Appomattox, just before daybreak, which was at that season about half past three o'clock. But the cavalry were not ready in season and did not start until four o'clock, and General Hincks, who followed the cavalry, did not move until five o'clock.[1]

The cavalry was to lead, and General Hincks, who had been over the ground June 9, was to follow on the City Point road, until he should turn off on the Jordan's Point road and form on the left for the attack. General Brooks was to follow on the City Point road and form on the right of General Hincks, and General Martindale was to march by the Spring Hill road near the river and form on the right of General Brooks. The infantry was delayed by the cavalry and did not move from the south side of the Appomattox until five o'clock. In about an hour, on arriving at the railroad, the cavalry came upon the enemy, with rifle-pits and abattis across the road, and drove them in, but soon coming upon artillery, General Kautz reported to me that he could not dislodge them, and I directed him to countermarch and move away to the left. I then

[1] Hincks's Report, *War Records*, vol. 80, p. 720.

ordered General Hincks to move directly, and at once, through the woods and attack the enemy. The report of General Hincks made five days later, on June 20, 1864,[1] describes the encounter and the result as follows: —

"About 5 o'clock, General Kautz's cavalry column having passed, my division was ordered into column and proceeded as far as the railroad, when its march was obstructed by a halt of the cavalry, and sharp firing of musketry and artillery was heard toward the front. I immediately made a personal reconnoissance and found that the enemy had opened fire from a position in Baylor's field, which commanded the road as it debouched from the wood and swamp near Perkinson's saw-mill, and that the head of the cavalry column had been driven in. Having reported the state of affairs to General Smith, I was ordered to deploy in two lines of battle, with skirmishers in front, and force a passage of the swamp. Duncan's brigade was formed in the first line; Holman's in the second. Considerable delay was occasioned by the difficulty in getting the Fifth Massachusetts Cavalry into line by reason of its awkwardness in manœuvre, it being composed of new recruits, and drilled only in Cooke's single rank cavalry formation, which entirely unfitted it to act as infantry in line. The lines, however, being formed, I ordered an advance, having directed Angel's

[1] *War Records*, vol. 80, p. 720.

battery into a position from which its guns were brought to bear upon the enemy over our advancing lines. The wood and swamp, through which ran a creek, was extremely difficult of passage, but the advance was finally made by most of the regiments, though furiously assailed with spherical case, canister, and musketry along the whole line. Some confusion, however, arose among the regiments upon the left of the road, and a few of the men fell back to the open space of ground. The enemy was found to be in a hastily constructed work, occupying a very strong position in Baylor's field, with four pieces of artillery and some force of infantry in the field-works, and two pieces of artillery, with supports, upon the crest of the hill on the right. The distance from the edge of the woods to the works was about 400 yards over open rising ground, which was speedily overcome, when the enemy fled toward Petersburg, leaving in our hands one 12-pounder gun. This line was carried at a little later than 8 A. M. About 9 A. M. I renewed my march (Colonel Holman's command in advance) by the road from the City Point road to the Jordan Point road."

Colonel T. L. Livermore of General Hincks's staff, who was present, gives the following description : [1] —

" General Hincks, on the receipt of the order, immediately formed each of his two brigades in

[1] *Records* of the Military Historical Society of Massachusetts.

line of battle, one following the other, and advanced into the wood above spoken of, and came at once under the sharp fire of a battery, beyond the wood and out of sight, which, by raking the highway and the woods upon each side of it, inflicted constant loss upon the lines of battle moving along the road and sweeping the woods widely on each side of it. But, although the woods were difficult to penetrate and the ground swampy, these colored troops, then for the first time encountering an enemy in the field, advanced steadily for about half a mile, first against the fire of the artillery and then against both artillery and musketry, and although two regiments were thrown into confusion, the leading brigade, emerging from the woods, and discovering the enemy intrenched upon a crest about 400 yards from the wood, . . . charged with great spirit, and caused them to retreat so hastily as to leave one piece of artillery in the works.

. . . . . .

"The work was carried by 8 o'clock A. M. An hour was then consumed before the march was taken up, in reforming the column, placing the reserve brigade in front, and in the inevitable delays consequent upon the loss of a tenth of the force.

"The column of Gen. Hincks then crossed to the Jordan Point road, and advanced fully a mile before encountering the enemy again, which

it did at the crossing of Baylor's Creek. The force here consisted merely of skirmishers, who were quickly driven under cover of the guns of the main works in front of Petersburg. Hincks's skirmishers held a line from the junction of the Jordan Point and Suffolk stage roads to Peeble's House northward, within range of the guns of the main works, at 11 A. M."

The first division under General Brooks, which was following General Hincks's division on the City Point road, was detained by the attack, and as I found that the enemy had sufficient troops to send outside of his works to defend a causeway, nearly two miles to the front, I ordered General Brooks to make the rest of his march in line of battle. He says that after his command had left the point at which General Hincks had his fight, he "threw out a strong line of skirmishers to connect as closely as practicable with Gen. Martindale on the opposite side of the railroad. This line was soon engaged with the enemy's skirmishers, occupying a heavy wood, from which they were driven out into an open plain, where they had quite a number of trench rifle-pits under cover of their main works." [1]

General Brooks did not give the time of the arrival of his command in front of the main works, but General Burnham, who was in command of one of his brigades, and who sent forward the strong line of skirmishers, encountered

[1] Letter to me, of March 5, 1866.

those of the enemy at ten o'clock, and they were undoubtedly the skirmishers in the heavy woods.

General Martindale, in a letter to me, dated December 11, 1865, says: "I arrived at Walthall's Hill and connected with Brooks at about 12 M." At twelve o'clock my three divisions had developed the enemy's main line.

The works, and the difficulty of getting into line in front of them, are very well described by Colonel T. L. Livermore, from whom I quote as follows: —

"This line of earthworks ran from the Appomattox River over low ground, a little south of east to the City Point Railroad, and then, turning sharply, mounted the high ground and ran along a series of crests for about a mile and a half from battery No. 5 to battery No. 12, and then was drawn back so as to surround the city and meet the Appomattox again south of the city.

"Gen. Smith's three divisions arrived in front of these works and covered the River, Jordan Point, and City Point roads, and were drawn up in line of battle, with Martindale in the low ground on the right, Brooks in the centre, and Hincks on the left. The two latter opposed the eastern front from battery 5 to battery 10; and it was against this front that active operations were directed. These works presented a very formidable aspect to the troops. They were situated on commanding crests, and the forest was

felled in their front so as to expose advancing lines to their fire for half a mile or more. Numerous pieces of artillery swept the field of fire rapidly and with precision, and a strong line of skirmishers in secure rifle-pits, well advanced in front of the works, kept up a spirited and effective fusilade. These circumstances necessarily resulted in the deploying of divisions under cover of the forest at such a distance from the works that difficulty was encountered in making connections, as the lines converged from a very extended arc ; and to reconnoitre with effect, and to place batteries where they could aid the assaulting parties, required that the lines should be advanced to exposed eminences, and that these positions should be held, all under a sharp fire, which was a work of difficulty and delay."

"General Smith reconnoitred personally on the skirmish line under the fire of the enemy's marksmen, and at about noon directed that Hincks's skirmishers should keep down the enemy's gunners, if possible, and that the field batteries should be pushed well in front to open on the enemy's works."

Directions were given to carry out these orders, and the result is well stated in the report of Colonel Duncan, commanding one of Hincks's brigades.[1] He says that a regiment of his, deployed as skirmishers, came up in front of Batteries 9 and 10, and that it was hoped that their

[1] Unpub. Rep. Mil. Hist. Soc. Mass.

fire would seriously annoy or silence the guns in these batteries, but that the distance of six hundred yards was too great, and the skirmish line could not in daylight advance farther, and he then proceeds as follows: "Meanwhile an attempt was made to open an artillery fire upon those redoubts from an open field to right and rear of this regiment. Both Captain Choate's and Captain Angel's batteries were brought up, but every part of the field was so thoroughly commanded by a direct, an oblique, and an enfilading fire from the enemy's guns, that prudence dictated the withdrawal of the batteries." He then goes on to say that at one P. M. the regiment deployed as skirmishers was withdrawn except two companies, and that "a double line of battle was then formed" of his brigade. "The lines, when formed, were advanced five hundred yards to the crest in Jordan's field which had been partially occupied by the skirmishers of the 1st Regiment. This was a work of great difficulty, owing to the triple fire of the enemy which had previously prevented the planting of our batteries, and which was now directed with increased rapidity and with great accuracy upon all our movements. . . .

"It was two o'clock P. M. when the crest was gained, and the right of the brigade connected with General Brooks' left."

Colonel Holman, commanding the other brigade of Hincks's division, also states in his

report[1] that, after he reached the high ground desired for the batteries, "the enemy opened, and kept up, a destructive fire from his artillery and sharpshooters upon my skirmish-line, which could not be returned with much effect, as he was well protected by his intrenchments." These were the "empty works" which General Grant says I spent the day in "reconnoitring."

At 1.30 P. M. I sent the following dispatch to General Butler:[2] —

HEADQUARTERS EIGHTEENTH ARMY CORPS,
June 15, 1864, 1.30 P. M.

The fight at Baylor's house broke up my arrangements, so that I have not been able to straighten my line; but this, however, will be done at once. Have the cars I have heard all day been bringing reënforcements? There are some Georgia troops in my front.

W. F. SMITH, Major-General.

It was, as stated in Colonel Duncan's report, two o'clock before the lines of battle could be formed. The question then arose whether I should order an assault in the usual way. It must be kept in mind that these were not temporary works, but permanent fortifications deliberately made for the defense of the "citadel of the Confederacy." They were thoroughly manned with artillery trained to command every

[1] Unpub. Rep. Mil. Hist. Soc. Mass.
[2] *War Records*, vol. 81, p. 83.

point of attack. The four light batteries, we found upon trial, could make no impression upon the works, and could not even be got into position. Every part of the field was thoroughly commanded by direct and oblique fire. General Grant said of the works: "If they had been properly manned, they could have held out against any force that could have attacked them, at least until reinforcements could have got up from the north of Richmond." [1]

With a full sense of my responsibility and of the importance of immediate action, which will appear from the dispatch which I soon after sent to General Hancock, I decided that an assault in the usual way with the troops I then had, one third of them being raw, would result in useless slaughter and a failure.

I then personally in front of my lines carefully examined the whole field and the line from the front of General Martindale on the right to that of General Hincks on the left. This occupied me until after four o'clock, and then I decided that by taking advantage of a ravine, which I had discovered in front of Batteries 6 and 7, I might hope to succeed. These batteries bore upon the salient. General Brooks in his report says: "It was determined by General Smith to throw forward this line of skirmishers, if possible, to the ravine just in front of the enemy's line, from which position it was supposed

[1] *Personal Memoirs of General Grant*, vol. ii. p. 295.

they might keep down the artillery fire while the main column would cross the opening in our front."

With these advantages and with this method of assault, I was confident that we could carry the works. At about this time a dispatch came from General Grant as follows:[1] —

CITY POINT, VA.,
June 15, 1864, 3.30 P. M.

MAJOR-GENERAL BUTLER, Commanding, &c., or MAJOR-GENERAL SMITH: The Second Corps, 28,000 strong, was directed to march this morning on the direct road from Wind-Mill Point to Petersburg, stopping at Harrison's Creek, in the absence of further orders. I have not yet heard a word of the result of the expedition against Petersburg, but still hearing firing in that direction and seeing indications of the enemy moving from the north to the south side of the James river, I have sent back orders to hurry up this corps. If you require it, send back to General Hancock, under cover to General Gibbon, with directions for him to read, and the corps will push forward with all speed.

U. S. GRANT, Lieutenant-General.

This is dated at 3.30 P. M., and must have been received not far from half past four. As soon as possible I wrote the following dispatch:[2]

[1] *War Records*, vol. 81, p. 73. [2] *Ib.*, p. 59.

HEADQUARTERS EIGHTEENTH CORPS,
June 15, 1864.

MAJOR-GENERAL HANCOCK OR GIBBON:

GENERAL, — General Grant has authorized me to call on you to hurry forward to Petersburg to aid in its capture. I do not suppose at present there is much infantry over there, but the wide open spaces along my entire front and the heavy artillery fire of the enemy, have prevented me from attempting any assault, and also preventing me from getting any artillery into position to do any service. If the Second Corps can come up in time to make an assault to-night after dark in vicinity of Norfolk and Petersburg Railroad, I think we may be successful. But to-night is the last night, as General Lee is reported crossing at Chaffin's Bluff. Please inform me by bearer when the head of your column may be expected here. My left is on the Jordan's Point road.

Respectfully,
WM. F. SMITH, Major-General, Commanding.

This dispatch was received by General Hancock at 5.40 P. M., according to his report.[1] It shows the exact state of my operations against Petersburg, and that I did not wish to have General Hancock come directly to my support, but to make an assault at a point on my left which I designated. I shall consider this dispatch more fully hereafter.

[1] *War Records*, vol. 80, p. 304.

As soon as I had determined, after a full examination, how to make the assault, I ordered the infantry to form line under cover of the woods and strengthen the lines of skirmishers. This order must have been given a little before five o'clock, and probably the disposition of the infantry took about half an hour. I then ordered the artillery, which had been forced to the rear under cover, to be placed in position to keep down the fire of the guns in front, while the infantry was exposed on the open ground. The artillery could not be brought on until all other preparations were completed, for, being exposed in the open field, it could not last long against such a fire as could be brought to bear upon it. When the order was given, it was found that the chief of artillery had, without consultation and upon his own responsibility, unhitched the horses of General Brooks's division and sent them to the rear for water.

General Brooks wrote in his letter of March 3, 1866, as follows: "The order for the advance was given, which was to be as much as possible under cover of the fire of our artillery; but at this moment an unlooked for delay was caused by the discovery that Captain Follett, commanding the artillery, had sent the artillery horses to water. This delay was an hour. *The attack was therefore made at the earliest practicable moment.*" The artillery was indispensable, and there was nothing to do but to wait.

As soon as it could be brought into position and had opened fire upon the enemy's works, heavy skirmish lines of infantry were ordered to advance. Simultaneously the gallant soldiers under Generals Brooks and Hincks rushed forward, and the salient in front of General Brooks and the works in front of General Hincks were taken in a few minutes. General Martindale's command did not capture any part of the works. He says: "When at length the advance was made, we went forward about a mile to the road running northerly from Friend's house. . . . It was dark enough to make an advance over the creek impracticable on the east side of the City Point highway, owing to a ditch, which I found subsequently was as much as eight feet deep. The men could not have crawled across it. Had a further advance been attempted, we should have moved immediately on to that ditch, behind which the rebels had a parapet."

The plan of assault adopted was to me a novelty, and I should not have been justified in adopting it except after careful reconnoissance and reflection. It succeeded perfectly, with a small loss of life, while the usual method of assault would certainly have involved a much larger loss of life, and would, in my judgment, have failed.

After the capture of the main works, a galling artillery fire was kept up from heavy profile works in the rear of the portion of the lines

carried by Hincks. I ordered the colored troops to carry them by assault. This was gallantly done. The last redoubt was carried by General Hincks at about nine o'clock. While General Hincks was attacking the redoubts, General Brooks's troops were formed for any movement which might be necessary.[1] The troops under General Brooks had taken the salient and ten guns; the colored troops under General Hincks had captured six guns. We also took about two hundred and thirty prisoners. No troops could have fought better than the first division under the skillful guidance of General Brooks and the officers under him; but special credit is due to General Hincks and the officers under him, for the brave and able handling of raw colored troops, so that they charged with all the steadiness and courage of veterans. As soon as we were in possession we began to turn the works to protect them against any attempt to retake them.

The cavalry, under General Kautz, was at his suggestion and that of General Butler detached from the infantry and directed to make an attack near the Norfolk and Petersburg Railroad, where he was said to have "trotted over" the intrenchments on the 9th of June. It was hoped that he would get into the rear of the intrenchments on our front, and our infantry

[1] This looked to an advance if found practicable, or to defense if attacked.

was directed not to fire into them. But General Kautz's attack failed, and at about half past five in the afternoon they left the front and retired behind the infantry without my permission, so that we had no support from them.[1]

The next day I issued the following circular congratulating the 18th Corps:[2] —

To the Eighteenth Army Corps: The general commanding desires to express to his command his appreciation of their soldierly qualities, as have been displayed during the campaign of the last seventeen days.

Within that time they have been constantly called upon to undergo all the hardships of a soldier's life and be exposed to all of its dangers.

Marches under a hot sun have ended in severe battle; after the battle, watchful nights in the trenches gallantly taken from the enemy.

But the crowning point of the honor they are entitled to has been won since the 15th instant, when a series of earthworks on most commanding positions and of formidable strength have been carried, with all the guns and material of war of the enemy, including prisoners and colors. The works have all been held and the trophies remain in our hands. The victory is all the more important to us, as the troops have never

[1] See Report of General August V. Kautz. *War Records*, vol. 80, p. 728.

[2] *War Records*, vol. 80, p. 706.

been regularly organized in camp where time has been given them to learn the discipline necessary to a well-organized *corps d'armée*, but they have been hastily concentrated and suddenly summoned to take part in the trying campaign of our country's being.

Such honor as they have won will remain imperishable.

To the colored troops, comprising the division of General Hincks, the general commanding would call the attention of his command. With the veterans of the Eighteenth Corps, they have stormed the works of the enemy and carried them, taking guns and prisoners, and in the whole affair they have displayed all the qualities of good soldiers.

By command of Major-General Smith:
WM. RUSSELL, JR., Assistant Adjutant-General.

Few operations in the history of our war will meet with severer condemnation than the bloody assaults at Port Hudson, Vicksburg, Cold Harbor, and Petersburg. General Grant states in his Memoirs that he regretted the last assaults at Vicksburg and at Cold Harbor. General Francis A. Walker, in his "History of the Second Army Corps" (p. 555), writes of the period during which the assaults at Cold Harbor and Petersburg took place, that "the terrible experiences of May and June in assaults on intrenched positions; assaults made often, not at a carefully

selected point, but 'all along the line,' assaults made as if it were a good thing to assault, and not a dire necessity; assaults made without an adequate concentration of troops, often without time for careful preparation, sometimes even without examination of the ground; these bitter experiences had brought about a reaction . . . the sentiment at headquarters . . . being adverse to assaults." See also Irwin's "History of the Nineteenth Corps" (pp. 205–208).

The assault on the 15th of June was made at carefully selected points, with an adequate concentration of troops, after a careful examination of the ground, and it succeeded with very little slaughter. From the time the infantry left Broadway at five o'clock in the morning during that long hot day of fighting, until my troops held the enemy's intrenchments at nine o'clock in the evening, not one moment was lost, except while we were waiting for the artillery horses.

While my plan for the seizure of Brown's Ferry and its execution, and my contribution to the success of the battle of Chattanooga may have led to more important results, because they were followed by the great victory won by General Grant, I have always regarded the operation of June 15, including the concentration of the troops, the method of assault by lines of skirmishers, and the careful selection of the point of attack, as my best achievement. I have no doubt that General Grant at that

time so regarded it. He went over the field with his staff on the next day, June 16, 1864, at 1.15 P. M.

General Grant, in a dispatch to General Butler on that day, referring to Petersburg, says: "I have been up to-day and examined the work done by our troops. The advantages gained are important."[1] Nothing had been done at that time at Petersburg by any troops except my own. General Brooks, who was a graduate of West Point, and was with General Grant in the Mexican War, met him on the 16th of June and explained to him fully all the operations of the 15th. He wrote in his letter of March 3, 1866, after making a statement of the details of the fighting from morning to night: "In a conversation with the Lieutenant General, when he was visiting the lines near the French house within a day or two of the attack, the amount of this statement [covering all the operations of the 15th] was made to him, and he expressed himself as fully appreciating the difficulties, and especially the delay caused by the artillery horses. But he seemed to derive consolation from the idea that no doubt the enemy had many such unexpected and unavoidable mishaps." General Grant, not three weeks after this conversation, recommended me for promotion to a position only inferior to his own and that of Generals Meade and Sherman, because I

[1] *War Records*, vol. 81, p. 98.

was "one of the most efficient officers in the service, readiest in expedients and most skillful in the management of troops in action." I never had a doubt that his opinion was based largely upon my handling of troops at the assault upon Petersburg.

I have thus far shown by the record: (1) That General Grant's statement that I received orders to march at once on the night of the 14th was untrue, and that the orders were to march just before daybreak. (2) That his statement that I got off in the night as directed was not true, but that owing to the delay of the cavalry, my infantry did not move until five o'clock in the morning, which at that season is about one hour and a half after daybreak. (3) That his statement that I confronted the enemy's pickets near Petersburg before daylight or early in the forenoon, and spent the rest of the day in reconnoitring what appeared to be empty works, is not true; but the truth is that we had serious fighting most of the time, from six in the morning until the enemy's main works were developed at eleven or twelve o'clock, and that my command could not form a connected line in front of the main works until two o'clock; that at that time becoming satisfied that on account of the severe fire of the enemy's artillery and the impossibility of holding my artillery in position long enough to do effective work, the works could not be carried by regular assault, I

examined the ground and works carefully for two hours, and devised a method by which, taking advantage of a weak place which I discovered in the enemy's line of intrenchments, I was enabled to carry the works with a small loss. (4) That his statement that I made the assault with colored troops, a part of my command only, is not true; but that the truth is that the assault was made by all the infantry, and although the colored troops and their officers are entitled to great credit, the salient or most important work and ten of the sixteen cannon were captured by the first division of white troops under General Brooks. (5) That General Grant's statement that I captured the works on the Appomattox is not true.

These statements are the more extraordinary, as, in addition to what appears from the Records and the letter of General Brooks just quoted, that General Grant visited the captured works the day after the assault, and went over them with his staff, and had the details of the fighting of the previous day explained to him, he must have had before him the reports of General Hincks and of the other officers.[1]

Only two questions remain, (1) whether I ought, immediately after the capture of the works, at about nine o'clock, with the troops I

[1] See dispatch of Dana, Assistant Secretary of War, June 16, 1864, 1 P. M. (*War Records*, vol. 80, p. 21.) Dispatch of General Grant hereinbefore cited.

then had, to have rushed on to attempt to capture Petersburg and reach the Appomattox River; (2) whether, after General Hancock came up, I ought to have requested him to direct an attack that night, instead of waiting and ordering the attack at just before daybreak.

As to the first question, whether I ought to have rushed on after the capture of the works with my own command. The answer to this must depend upon the number and condition of the men I had under me, the number which I had reason to believe the enemy then had to defend Petersburg, the darkness of the night, and what I knew of the condition of the ground in front of me for making or resisting an attack, and the importance of what I had gained and the risk of losing it.

As to the number and condition of my troops. General Grant writes,[1] "General Butler was ordered to send Smith with his troops reinforced, as far as that could be conveniently done, from other parts of the Army of the James. He gave Smith about six thousand reinforcements, including some twenty-five hundred cavalry under General Kautz, and about thirty-five hundred colored infantry under Hincks."

I have no doubt that General Grant believed this, as General Butler, June 15, sent him a dispatch of which the following is a part:[2] —

[1] *Personal Memoirs of General Grant*, vol. ii. p. 293.
[2] *War Records*, vol. 81, p. 73.

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF VIRGINIA AND NORTH CAROLINA, NEAR POINT OF ROCKS, VA., *June* 15, 1864.

LIEUT.-GEN. GRANT, Commanding Armies of United States:

GENERAL, — I have been watching the progress upon Petersburg at the lookout. There has been pretty sharp fighting, and I could see the enemy withdrawing on one part of the line and our forces advancing, but further I could not see. Smith must have at least 15,000 men with him, besides cavalry and four batteries of artillery. I cannot conceive of any more force being needed. . . .

BENJ. F. BUTLER, Major-General.

General Butler knew at that time, as well as he did October 24, 1874, when he told the truth,[1] that he had taken from me most if not all of General Ames's division, the strongest I had, for the defense of Bermuda Hundred, and had given me instead about 3,700 raw colored troops, and that I started on the morning of June 15 with only about 10,000 infantry. These colored troops were led by very able and brave officers, and although one or two regiments were only half drilled and got into confusion during the day, they excited my admiration by the gallantry and steadiness of their assaults. Still they could not give me the confidence for all emergencies that General Ames's division of veterans would

[1] *Ante*, p. 66.

have inspired. General Ames with his division did not arrive at Bermuda Hundred until early on the 15th,[1] as I had ordered him to stay at White House, and see to the shipment of the last man. I expected him to follow as soon as he arrived, as my dispatch to General Butler at midnight notified him that Ames had not arrived.[2]

I had at the time the assault was successful, as shown by the count the next day, about 8,000 effective men, about one third of them raw troops. Although the colored troops had fought so well during the day, I found them in such a state of excitement and confusion after the victory, that I did not dare to trust them to resist an attack, and asked General Hancock to put his men in their places in the intrenchments. The white troops had been exhausted by days and nights of fighting and watching at Cold Harbor, and by almost constant fighting from six o'clock in the morning during a long day of intense heat on the 15th.

The next question to be determined is how many troops did the enemy have or had I reason to suppose they had at that time in Petersburg. In my dispatch at 1.30 P. M., I asked if the trains I had heard running brought reinforcements. General Grant states that there was no evidence that Petersburg had been reinforced by a single brigade. What the facts

[1] *War Records*, vol. 81, p. 80. [2] *Ib.*, p. 83.

were, appears from the reports of our signal officers and others, and the dispatches of the enemy, which I here insert. Captain Norton was at the head of the signal corps of the Army of the James.

June 16, 1864, 9.30 A. M.

. . . They [the enemy] have been crowding trains to Petersburg since 2 P. M. yesterday by road and rail. . . .[1]

At 9.30 P. M. of the 15th, before we could possibly move forward, I received the following dispatch :[2] —

COBB'S HILL SIGNAL STATION,
June 15, 1864. (Received 9.30 P. M.)

GENERAL SMITH, — Hancock has been ordered up by General Grant's and my orders. Another army corps will reach you by 10 A. M. to-morrow. It is crossing. *They have not got 10,000 men down yet.* Push on to the Appomattox.

B. F. BUTLER, Major-General Commanding.

The following dispatches are also important : —

TOWER SIGNAL STATION,
COBB'S HILL, *June* 15, 1864, 6.50 P. M.

CAPTAIN NORTON, Chief Signal Officer :

. . . The fight has been raging with great violence for half an hour near Harrison's Creek. A train of fourteen cars loaded with troops just

[1] *War Records*, vol. 81, p. 88.
[2] *Ib.*, p. 83. The italics are mine.

passed toward Petersburg. The enemy also appears to be sending troops on the *roads west of Petersburg*. Another train of twenty-two cars has just passed toward Petersburg loaded with troops.

CRAFT, Lieutenant, Signal Officer.

On this dispatch is indorsed, "Respectfully forwarded for the information of Lieutenant-General Grant by command of Major-General Butler. L. B. NORTON,
Captain and Chief Signal Officer." [1]

On the same page of the "War Records" are two other dispatches: —

RIVER-BANK [SPRING HILL] SIGNAL STATION,
June 15, 1864, 7.30 P. M.

CAPTAIN NORTON, — A train of thirteen cars has just passed toward Petersburg; also a heavy gun by the turnpike.

GARRETT, Sergeant Signal Corps.

The signal officer on the tower reports the turnpike full of rising dust.

SIGNAL TOWER, *June* 15, 1864, 8.30 P. M.

CAPTAIN NORTON, — Two trains have passed toward Petersburg. Too dark to see what they were loaded with or the number of the cars. . . .

CRAFT, Lieutenant, Signal Officer.

[1] *War Records*, vol. 81, p. 79. The italics are mine.

The records of the War Office at Richmond, printed with our own, also throw light on the subject.

As early as June 13, General Dearing notifies Colonel Otey, the Assistant Adjutant-General, that transports with troops were passing up James River, which he thinks are sent for an attack on Petersburg.[1]

June 14, 10 A. M., General Beauregard sends a dispatch to General Bragg stating that he cannot reinforce Petersburg without abandoning Bermuda Hundred.[2]

On the same page of the "War Records" it appears that before 9.10 P. M., on June 14, General Lee had sent General Hoke's division to Drewry's Bluff with a view to reinforce General Beauregard in case Petersburg should be threatened.

The "War Records" show the following dispatch :[3] —

H'DQ'RS DEP'T OF NORTH CAROLINA AND SOUTHERN VA., *June* 14, 1864.

MAJ.-GEN. R. F. HOKE, Drewry's Bluff :

GENERAL, — The Commanding General directs that you move at once as rapidly as possible with your division to Petersburg, leaving one brigade at Walthall Junction.

Respectfully your obedient servant,
JNO. M. OTEY, Assistant Adj.-Gen.

[1] *War Records*, vol. 81, p. 649. [2] *Ib.*, p. 653.
[3] *Ib.*, p. 654.

General Hoke on the same day, June 14, writes to General Bragg : [1] —

"My troops are on the march. Will camp half a mile from Drewry's Bluff on the river road."

This division had by the returns over 5,300 officers and men present for duty June 30.[2]

At 11.30 A. M., June 15, General Hoke sends the following dispatch to General Bragg : —

"I have just received orders to *cross the river* and report to General Beauregard. My troops are on the march." [3]

This implies that the troops under the orders of the previous day had marched to a point near the Appomattox and had only to cross over to be in Petersburg. I had probably heard them when in my dispatch of 1.30 P. M. I asked if reinforcements had arrived.

At 10.20 P. M., June 15, Major-General Johnson was ordered to evacuate Bermuda Hundred and march to Petersburg.[4]

Johnson's division had by returns of June 30 over 6,800 officers and men present on duty.[5]

General Beauregard says that on the morning of June 15 he had for the immediate defense of Petersburg Wise's brigade, some artillery, two regiments of Dearing's cavalry, and a few militia.[6]

[1] *War Records*, vol. 81, p. 654.
[2] *Ib.*, p. 707.
[3] *Ib.*, p. 658. The italics are mine.
[4] *Ib.*, pp. 677, 678.
[5] *Ib.*, p. 707.
[6] *Ib.*, p. 675.

General Grant states the number at about 2,500. As there were at least thirty-five pieces of artillery, handled with great skill, upon the works in front of my command at twelve o'clock when we first developed them, and the woods were filled with skirmishers who fought like veterans, I have no doubt that the force was underestimated. Some of the prisoners I captured said they had just crossed the James at Drewry's Bluff. The enemy had anticipated the attack, and had ordered General Hoke's division to march to Petersburg "as rapidly as possible" on the 14th, before I had arrived at Bermuda Hundred, or had even heard of the proposed attack on Petersburg. At 7.35 A. M. on the 15th General Dearing reported to General Beauregard our advance on Petersburg from Broadway, and as General Beauregard was doing all in his power all that day to reinforce Petersburg, it is hardly possible that he had failed to get in some reinforcements before the arrival of General Hoke's division.[1]

Craft, signal officer, at 6.50 P. M. reported troops sent from the west of Petersburg.[2]

General Hoke must have arrived as early as two or three o'clock, probably sooner, as General Beauregard in his report does not intimate that he was not present at the assault or that there had been any delay in his movement. But, assuming that there were only 2,500 men defend-

[1] *War Records*, vol. 81, p. 655. [2] See *ante*, pp. 94, 95.

ing Petersburg in the morning, the addition of two brigades of the 3,000 or 4,000 of General Hoke's command (as it is possible that one brigade left at Walthall's Hill did not arrive until later) made at least 6,000 or 7,000 men in Petersburg when I made the assault. There was no reason why most of these should not have concentrated in front of my command. Some of General Hoke's troops were among the prisoners I captured.[1] My force was certainly reduced one tenth by the heat and continuous fighting of the day, and could not have exceeded 9,000 infantry.

There can be no reasonable doubt therefore that the enemy's force behind the fortifications which I carried was larger in proportion to the force which I had, than was the force behind any of the intrenchments assaulted at Cold Harbor or at any of the subsequent assaults in front of Petersburg. It is clear, therefore, that General Grant was mistaken in saying that Petersburg had not been reinforced by a single brigade when I attacked. It is also clear that my command was not so much greater than that of the enemy as would justify any rash action. But the question was decided by me not with the knowledge of the exact number of troops which had arrived at Petersburg, but upon a judgment which I had to form upon the information I had from the signal corps and from the

[1] See Dana's dispatch, *ante*, pp. 26, 27.

dispatches of General Butler and General Grant. General Butler's dispatch received by me at 9.30 P. M., stating that the enemy had not got 10,000 men down yet, and the dispatches from the signal corps which I received, gave me the impression that the enemy had more troops in Petersburg than I had outside of it.

Now what was the situation when I was called upon to decide whether to rush on after the capture of the works? General Martindale's command had come upon a ditch and creek with a rebel parapet behind it, which he found it impossible to cross in the dark.[1]

I reconnoitred in person as soon as we had possession of the captured works. In front of Hincks's division the road led immediately into a defile between two high hills, one thickly wooded, making a strong defensive position in the daytime, and one almost impregnable at night, even if held by a comparatively small force. This line was occupied at that time by the enemy. Colonel Noyes, of the 38th Regiment of United States Colored Troops, writes as follows: "I wish to say that on the eve of that day, after the fighting had ceased, while passing in front of our line, I was unable to discover the enemy's lines with accuracy, although but a short distance from them, and was saved from passing into their line by a sudden volley of musketry, induced probably by our near ap-

[1] See statement of General Martindale, *ante*, p. 83.

proach." Now, however bright the moon may have been, in those woods, with the heavy June foliage above us, it would have been impossible to distinguish friend from foe.[1] I knew also in a general way, although I had little time to study maps after I learned that I was to make the attack, that the railroad bridge, which was the important point to be reached, was nearly two and a half miles away, that we must cross three or four creeks and pass through forests, and that nearly one third of the way was through the city of Petersburg.

Besides all this, there was the risk of losing the fortifications we had captured. As has been shown, they were thoroughly constructed, and if as fully manned with infantry as they were with artillery, could not be taken except at an enormous cost of life. I had only broken through and captured a part of the line. On my right and on my left were works still in the hands of the enemy. I had not a man to leave to turn the works if I was to rush on for the capture of Petersburg. I had requested General Hancock to attack on the left of my command, and thus supposed he had marched in that direction. His troops did not reach my works until eleven o'clock, or about two hours later.[2] It seemed to

[1] General Hancock says it was too dark to advance when he had relieved General Hincks. It was no darker then than when the fighting stopped, as the moon set about 1.30 A. M.

[2] See my telegram to General Butler, *War Records*, vol. 81, p. 83.

me then, and seems to me now, that it would have been simple madness for me to have moved forward at that time, and would almost inevitably have resulted in disaster and the loss of all we had gained.

There cannot be found in the history of war a better illustration of the folly and danger of rushing on under such circumstances than in what occurred at Bermuda Hundred under the immediate command of General Butler himself, on the 16th and 17th of June.

At 10.20 P. M., on the night of the 15th, the rebels abandoned their very strong fortifications, extending from the James to the Appomattox in front of Bermuda Hundred, and marched to the defense of Petersburg. Our troops took possession the following morning, but instead of turning the works so that they could be held against the enemy, they rushed on and began to tear up the railroad, and succeeded in destroying two or three miles. At 12.50 P. M., on the 16th, General Butler, with evident satisfaction, sent the following dispatch to General Grant: [1] —

LIEUTENANT-GENERAL GRANT, — General Turner is now at Port Walthall Junction with 530 men, all the tried soldiers he has, tearing up the Petersburg railroad. General Terry has moved out on the turnpike and is endeavoring to strike the railroad there. I have ordered Kautz's

[1] *War Records*, vol. 81, p. 98.

cavalry in, as I am very much in need of them to feel the enemy on the right.

B. F. Butler, Major-General.

All this was done under the orders of General Butler with a half protest from General Terry.[1]

General Grant had been to examine the fortifications at Petersburg, and probably did not receive General Butler's dispatch until about five o'clock P. M. At 4.10 P. M. he sends a dispatch. He says nothing about tearing up railroads, but did say: "If it is possible, *we should hold a position in advance of your present line.* Can you not turn the enemy's works to face the other way and occupy their line?"[2]

He said he had ordered two divisions of Wright's corps to aid General Butler. At 5.30 P. M. General Butler sends a dispatch to General Grant in which he says, "I have improved the opportunity to destroy some three miles of the railroad," and says he will order his picket line to hold, if possible, the enemy's works.[3]

In a dispatch dated June 16, 10.45 P. M., General Butler reported to General Grant exactly what he had done. It shows that as soon as he discovered the evacuation of the rebel works he rushed through them and began to tear up the railroad and was waiting for Wright's corps to come up and turn the enemy's lines.[4]

[1] *War Records*, vol. 81, p. 106.
[2] *Ib.*, p. 99. The italics are mine.
[3] *Ib.*, p. 99.
[4] *Ib.*, p. 101.

While the destruction of the railroad was of trifling importance and was repaired within a day or two, the holding of the enemy's lines would practically have given us permanent command of the railroad, and probably would have made it necessary for the enemy to evacuate either Richmond or Petersburg. It is easy to imagine the disgust with which General Grant must have read what must have seemed to him these idiotic dispatches. Is it strange that within a few days he emphatically declared General Butler incompetent to command and requested his removal? The result of General Butler's brilliant movement was that the enemy recaptured their works with a *single division* under General Pickett. The result cannot be more clearly stated than it was in the dispatches of C. A. Dana, Assistant Secretary of War, to Secretary Stanton. Under date of June 17 he writes: [1] —

"General Butler reports at 5.17 P. M. that the enemy have formed in line of battle, driven in his pickets, and occupies the powerful lines in front of Bermuda Hundred which they abandoned to him yesterday, all this notwithstanding he had with him two divisions of the Sixth Corps in addition to his own force."

The next day, at eight A. M., Mr. Dana sent the following to Secretary Stanton: —

"No report from General Butler since my last

[1] *War Records*, vol. 80, p. 23.

dispatch. He was ordered to retake the position, which the enemy had reoccupied after leaving it open to him for thirty hours, but no sounds of his guns have been heard to indicate an attempt, though the two divisions of the Sixth Corps had been sent him expressly to secure the position. He had not even a line of battle or a cannon placed upon the heights."

A competent officer within those thirty hours would have turned the fortifications and made them impregnable by any force the enemy could then have sent against them.

I now come to the question whether, after General Hancock called upon me at about 9.30 in the evening, I failed to do my duty in not advising him to advance. As General Hancock ranked me the moment he came upon the field he had command of all the forces.

General Grant states that General Hancock waived his rank in my favor. This is not true. Only General Hancock and I know what was done. We agree as to the facts. He said in his report:[1] "I now informed him [General Smith] that two divisions of my troops were close at hand and ready for any further movements which in his judgment and knowledge of the field should be made." He waived no rank, gave me no command, but simply put upon me the responsibility of deciding what he should do with the two divisions. This of course did not relieve

[1] *War Records*, vol. 80, p. 305.

him from any responsibility. I advised him according to the best light I had, and I have never doubted that my decision was a wise one, and he took the responsibility of acting upon it. It was then dark; his troops could not come up and be ready for an advance much before midnight, and the simple question was whether we should move forward then into a field we knew nothing about or wait two or three hours until just before daybreak. I was of opinion that it was better to wait, and he concurred in that opinion. After that I had no further share in the operations.

I have always regretted that my troops were not ordered to take part in the attack the next morning before daybreak. Although my white veterans had had as much fighting at Cold Harbor as any, and had been fighting most of the long hot day of the 15th, they were much less demoralized than those of the 2d Corps, who had fought through the Wilderness and Spottsylvania as well as Cold Harbor. My troops were also flushed with victory, and I reported to General Meade the next day: "I have in the neighborhood of 8,000 men for an attack, in good fighting trim and good spirits, and will be ready to make an attack in my front at any hour which may be indicated by your order." [1]

The condition of the Army of the Potomac at

[1] *War Records*, vol. 81, p. 113.

this time is well described by General Francis A. Walker in his "History of the Second Army Corps," p. 556.

In all that I have said or may say I do not wish to be understood as criticising in any way the conduct of General Hancock. He served under me in command of a brigade in 1862. Of his conduct and that of his command in one of the battles during the advance from Yorktown I reported:[1] "The brilliancy of the plan of battle, the coolness of its execution, the seizing of the proper instant for changing from the defensive to the offensive, the steadiness of the troops engaged, and the completeness of the victory, are subjects to which I earnestly call the attention of the General-in-Chief for his just praise."

I need not say, for all the world knows it, that there was no braver or more efficient corps commander than General Hancock. I believe he was my friend until his death.

My relations with General Hancock and his troops during the day are clearly shown by the dispatches printed in the "War Records." The dispatch to General Butler and myself, copied on page 80, was dated 3.30 P. M. I must have received it a little before five o'clock. I at once sent the dispatch to General Hancock, copied on page 81. In it I described briefly the situation, and requested him to make an assault on my

[1] *War Records*, vol. 12, p. 528.

left, near the Norfolk and Petersburg Railroad. I told him that my left was on the Jordan's Point road. The railroad and the Jordan's Point road were prominent points, and in referring to them I gave the best description that I could of the place where I desired him to attack. When one of General Hancock's staff came later, just as I was about to make the assault, I sent him to General Hincks, who was on my left, and who could point out the place of attack.[1] From my knowledge of General Hancock I expected that he would make the attack. But I cannot do better than quote General Walker as to his condition at this time as the probable reason why he did not act upon my suggestion.

"It is difficult to say how much of the failure to seize the opportunity offered was due to the fact that the fatigues and excitement of the past forty days had brought about a renewal of General Hancock's disability from his severe Gettysburg wounds. That gallant and devoted officer, who, day or night, never spared himself, whether in camp, on the march, or in battle, was now suffering intense pain, as fragments of the badly splintered bone, dislodged by six weeks of almost continuous labor in the saddle, began to work their way out of the inflamed flesh, requiring him frequently to seek rest in an ambulance or on the ground, when otherwise he would

[1] See Appendix No. 7 for statement of General Hincks.

have been galloping over the field, or leading the march of his foremost division." [1]

But whatever was the reason, at nine o'clock I heard nothing definite from him or his troops, and I therefore sent the following dispatch to General Butler: [2] —

June 15, 1864, 9 P. M.

GENERAL BUTLER, — I must have the Army of the Potomac reinforcements immediately.

SMITH, General.

Not long after, just as I had finished making a reconnoissance to determine whether a further advance was practicable, much to my astonishment General Hancock appeared in person, and stated that the head of General Birney's division was about one mile in the rear of the troops of General Hincks. It seemed that no attempt had been made to make the assault as I had requested, and that the position of General Hancock's command was such that none could be made that night until it would be too late. There seemed to me to be no other course than to wait about three hours for daybreak. As my colored troops were raw, I was anxious lest they might fail to hold the works in case of an attack. I therefore requested General Hancock to relieve them in the intrenchments by ordering his own troops to fill their places. As he says in his

[1] *History of the Second Army Corps*, p. 532.

[2] *War Records*, vol. 81, p. 83.

report, I described to him the operations of the day, and pointed out as well as I could in the dusk of the evening the position of the enemy's lines we had carried. General Hancock says in his report[1] that he "directed Birney and Gibbon to move up and occupy the captured earthworks from the Friend House on the right to the Dunn House on the left of the Prince George Road." This was the part of the works held by General Hincks's division. General Hancock also says that "by the time this movement was completed it was eleven P. M., and too late and too dark for any immediate advance." General Gibbon in his report[2] says that it was between two and three o'clock in the morning before his troops got into the place assigned them. After the arrangements had been made, I returned to my headquarters in the rear of General Brooks's division near the middle of my line and tried to get a little sleep. I had had none since the night of the 13th, and was thoroughly exhausted by fatigue and a severe attack of dysentery from which I had been suffering ever since I left Cold Harbor. About midnight a messenger came from General Butler directing me to push on to the Appomattox. I had then received no notice that any of General Hancock's troops had got into my intrenchments on my left, and as I expected to receive such notice when they did get in, I wrote the following dispatch:[3] —

[1] *War Records*, vol. 80, p. 305. [2] *Ib.*, p. 366.
[3] *Ib.*, vol. 81, p. 83.

June 15, 1864, 12 Midnight.

General Butler, — It is impossible for me to go farther to-night, but unless I misapprehend the topography, I hold the key to Petersburg. General Hancock not yet up. General Ames not here. General Brooks has three batteries, General Martindale one, and General Hincks ten light guns.

W. F. Smith, Major-General.

Of course I did not refer to General Hancock or General Ames personally, but to the troops which they represented.[1] I might have added that as General Hancock ranked me, I had no authority to order an advance. He ordered Generals Birney and Gibbon to advance just before daybreak. This they failed to do. From the report of General Morgan, the chief of staff of the 2d Corps, of a reconnoissance which he made after daylight on the morning of the 16th, it seems probable that if the advance had been made as ordered, Petersburg might have been captured.[2] But they did not advance until long after daylight, and then met the enemy in force. This, however, is a matter with which I had no connection, and for which I was in no way respon-

[1] In *Butler's Book* the words "General Hancock not yet up" are interpreted as referring to General Hancock personally. As General Butler says that I had seen General Hancock a little after nine o'clock, he charges me with mendacity. The charge is too puerile to be worth noticing.

[2] See Walker's *History*, p. 534.

sible. On the 16th and 17th more than 50,000 men under General Meade sought to capture Petersburg, which was held by only 14,000 of the enemy. He lost more men than I had on the 15th and gained little.

So far as my operations on the 15th were concerned, I heard no criticisms from any one. On the contrary, I was never more highly commended by General Butler and General Grant than during the three weeks which followed my attack. But General Hancock was severely criticised, and, as I wrote to him at the time, I thought unjustly.

General Walker in his History (p. 531) writes: "Such is the story of the 15th of June, a day which was a very black one in the calendar of the gallant commander of the Second Corps, who bitterly felt the imputations which malice or ignorance *led certain persons of high station*,[1] as well as some irresponsible critics, to cast upon him."

[1] The italics are mine.

CHAPTER VI.

UPON WHOM RESTS THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE FAILURE TO CAPTURE PETERSBURG IN 1864, AND GENERAL GRANT'S MISREPRESENTATIONS UPON THE SUBJECT.

In order to understand upon whom rests the responsibility for the failure to capture Petersburg in the spring or summer of 1864, it is necessary to explain the field of operations and to review the history of the campaign of the Department of Virginia and North Carolina from the beginning.

There were two points on the south side of James River, about eighteen miles below Richmond, one called Bermuda Hundred, and the other City Point. They were separated only by the Appomattox River. City Point was within about eight miles of Petersburg, within easy access to the railroad coming north to that place. Bermuda Hundred was on the north of the Appomattox, separated by it from Petersburg, and had the advantage, in General Butler's eyes, that it required short lines of fortifications between the high banks of the James and the Appomattox to make it as "impregnable as Fortress Monroe." It did not apparently occur to him that

if this narrow neck made it difficult for the enemy to get in upon us, it made it equally easy for the enemy, by also throwing up works in our front, to prevent our getting out to do him any harm. It appears from "Butler's Book" that General Grant came down to Fortress Monroe, and that the merits of Bermuda Hundred and City Point were fully discussed. Soon after this interview, General Grant wrote General Butler a letter containing the following clauses :[1] —

" . . . To the force you already have will be added about ten thousand men from South Carolina under Major-General Gillmore, who will command them in person. Maj.-Gen. W. F. Smith is ordered to report to you to command the troops sent into the field from your own department. . . . When you are notified to move, *take City Point*[2] with as much force as possible. Fortify, or rather intrench, at once, and concentrate *all your troops for the field there as rapidly as you can.* From City Point directions cannot be given at this time for your further movements."

In a letter of April 9, General Grant wrote to General Meade that " with Smith and Gillmore, Butler will seize City Point."[3]

And again, General Grant, by letter of April 16, wrote to General Butler :[4] " What I ask is, that with them and all *you can concentrate* from your own command, you seize upon *City Point.*"

[1] *War Records*, vol. 60, p. 795.
[2] The italics are mine.
[3] *War Records*, vol. 60, p. 828.
[4] *Ib.*, p. 885.

Bermuda Hundred was above City Point on the James River.

In violation of these orders, General Butler on the 5th of May landed only a portion of the division (of colored troops) at City Point and the remainder of the forces of the 10th and 18th Corps under General Gillmore and myself at Bermuda Hundred. General Grant was too busy with his operations below Washington to attend to this movement. General Butler does me the honor to state that I did not approve of this plan of campaign. In this he is correct. His statement that General Grant virtually approved of the landing with the main force at Bermuda Hundred is not correct, as he had no interview with General Grant after the early part of April, and General Grant's written orders of April 2, 9, and 16, must have been the only orders, and are peremptory that he should concentrate all his forces at City Point. It appears, also, that the Secretary of the Navy, as late as April 29, ordered Admiral Lee not to coöperate with the landing of troops above City Point.

Bermuda Hundred was perfectly safe, but when the enemy had completed his counter lines of intrenchments from the James to the Appomattox parallel with ours and directly in front of them, it was almost impossible to get out of it, and it is well known that General Grant described General Butler as "bottled up" at

Bermuda Hundred. His language in his report of July 22, 1865, was:[1] "His [Butler's] army, therefore, though in a position of great security, was as completely shut off from further operations directly against Richmond, as if it had been in a bottle strongly corked."

General Barnard, one of the ablest officers of the army, was sent down to examine Butler's position, and he reported that "the position was very strong for defensive purposes . . . but that Gen. Butler could not move from where he was in coöperation, and produce an effect."[2] This is contained in Grant's apology to Butler in his "Personal Memoirs."[3] General Butler quotes this in his book, not apparently seeing that it fully justified the original charge that he was bottled up.[4]

General Grant had stated that Richmond was to be the objective point, and that it was neces-

[1] *War Records*, vol. 67, p. 20.

[2] See *ante*, p. 20.

[3] Vol. 2, pp. 151–152.

[4] In a note to an article which was published in the Century Company's *War Book* several years since, I stated that General Grant indorsed entirely the plan of General Butler. My opinion was formed from the statements of General Butler and an imperfect knowledge of the later written instructions of General Grant. It is now clear to me, from a careful examination of all the instructions, and the statements of General Grant in his reports, that he intended to have all the forces land at City Point, and that an attack on Petersburg was necessarily the first step in the campaign, and that General Butler acted in direct violation of his orders. See General Grant's letter to General Halleck, of May 21, *ante*, p. 18, and Halleck's dispatch to Butler, of May 26, with Butler's reply (*War Records*, vol. 69, pp. 234, 235).

sary to hold "close to the south bank of James River." It is remarkable that he did not in his written instructions mention Petersburg as the first point to be taken. To any one with the eye of a soldier it was obvious, on even a slight examination, that no movement from City Point, or even Bermuda Hundred, could be safely made against Richmond, except with a very large force, without first capturing Petersburg. While Petersburg remained in the hands of the enemy, a large force would be necessary to protect the flank and rear of an army moving from Bermuda Hundred to Richmond. The force under General Butler was not equal to this.[1]

Now General Butler, having, on the 5th of May, seized Bermuda Hundred, in direct viola-

[1] After the event, General Grant did not hesitate to criticise General Butler for not capturing Petersburg at this time. In his report dated July 22, 1865, he says: "Before giving General Butler his instructions, I visited him at Fort Monroe, and in conversation pointed out the apparent importance of getting possession of Petersburg" (*W. R.*, vol. 67, p. 17). In another part of the same report, General Grant, referring to the time spent between the 6th and the 13th of May, when the attack was made on Drewry's Bluff, says: "The time thus consumed from the 6th lost to us the benefit of the surprise and capture of Richmond and Petersburg" (*ib.*, vol. 67, p. 20). In his *Memoirs*, vol. 2, p. 148, General Grant says: "He [General Butler] neglected to attack Petersburg, which was almost defenseless." No one can doubt that General Grant made a very grave mistake in not in terms directing General Butler to capture Petersburg at once. It could easily have been done on the 6th of May, with the force under General Butler's command. General Beauregard's forces were then in North Carolina. It could have been done, but not as easily, on the 9th of May, when it was advised by General Gillmore and myself.

tion of the orders of General Grant, fortified it, and sent out the 10th Corps and my own command to attempt to destroy the railroads and move towards Petersburg.

As soon as General Gillmore and I had an opportunity to consult, we found that we agreed that the movement, both from the nature of the country and the situation of Petersburg, was impracticable, and thought it our duty to suggest to General Butler that Petersburg should be first taken.

We accordingly wrote the following letter to make that suggestion in as respectful terms as we could find: [1] —

SWIFT CREEK, *May* 9, 1864, 7 P. M.

MAJ.-GEN. B. F. BUTLER, commanding Department of Virginia and North Carolina:

GENERAL, — We have conferred together upon the problem before us, and respectfully suggest for your consideration, whether it would not be better and secure to us greater advantages to withdraw to our lines to-night, destroying all that part of the road this side of Chester Station, which we left to-day, and then cross the Appomattox on a pontoon bridge, that can be thrown across below General Smith's headquarters, and cut all the roads which come into Petersburg on that side. Such a bridge can readily be constructed in one night, *and all the work of cut-*

[1] *War Records*, vol. 68, p. 35.

ting the road, and perhaps capturing the city, can be accomplished in one day,[1] without involving us in heavy losses. If we should remain here and be successful to-morrow, the roads coming into Petersburg on that side still remain intact, with the Appomattox between us and them, and we may even then be forced to adopt the plan we now suggest.

Very respectfully your obedient servants,
Q. A. Gillmore,
Maj.-Gen. Com'd'g Tenth Army Corps,
W. F. Smith,
Maj.-Gen. Com'd'g Eighteenth Army Corps.

General Butler refused even to consider our suggestion, but at once wrote an insulting reply beginning as follows: "While I regret an infirmity of purpose which did not permit you to state to me, when I was personally present, the suggestion which you make in your written note," and declined to attack Petersburg.[2]

The movement from Bermuda Hundred was a scheme of his own devising, and his vanity would not suffer him even to listen to a suggestion.

Between the 9th and 16th of May there was much gallant fighting, including the battle of Drewry's Bluff, but the result was that on the 16th of May, after a loss of several thousand men, General Butler's army was back in its

[1] The italics are mine.
[2] See Appendix No. 3 for the full correspondence.

intrenchments at Bermuda Hundred. Probably nothing but the failure of General Whiting to obey the command of General Beauregard to move promptly from Petersburg to attack our army on its left flank saved it from destruction at the battle of Drewry's Bluff on the 16th of June.[1]

General Beauregard had constructed soon after May 16 a line of intrenchments between the rivers in front of our own, which he reported to President Davis would enable him with 10,000 men to hold in check and neutralize a force of at least 25,000 men.[2]

General Butler, as an excuse for this result of an enormous waste of life, makes this statement: "I was where I was in direct obedience to the plan of campaign to which I was confined by the orders of General Grant."[3]

I have shown from General Grant's written orders that General Butler's forces were "bottled up" where they were, in direct violation of General Grant's instructions.

At this time, as has been previously stated, Generals Meigs and Barnard were, at the request of General Grant, sent down to ascertain why General Butler had accomplished nothing, and upon their report that he was in a safe place but

[1] See letter of General Beauregard, *War Records*, vol. 68, p. 260.

[2] *War Records*, vol. 69, p. 818.

[3] *Butler's Book*, p. 664.

could not get out of it to do any service, he was directed to send me with my command to the Army of the Potomac.

By this time General Butler had begun to realize the importance of the suggestion that he should attack Petersburg, which he had rejected with scorn on the 9th of May. He had caused to be constructed a pontoon bridge across the Appomattox at the point recommended by General Gillmore and myself on the 9th. There was a plan formed to send me with the 18th Corps to capture Petersburg on the 29th of May, when transports arrived to take my corps to Cold Harbor.

Subsequently, on the 9th of June, General Butler sent General Gillmore with a small and inadequate force to attack Petersburg. He failed to capture it, and General Butler in consequence took measures to have him relieved in disgrace from his command; but General Grant, after seeing the fortifications which General Gillmore had been sent to capture, quietly requested General Butler to relieve General Gillmore upon his own request, and he was relieved in that way.

I now come to the period subsequent to the battle of Cold Harbor, and shall show in the Records who was responsible for the failure to capture Petersburg on the 15th of June. On the 11th of June, when General Grant had decided to make the flank movement across the James River, he sent a letter to General Butler

giving notice of this movement. After stating that the 18th Corps was to move rapidly to Bermuda Hundred, he wrote: "Expecting the arrival of the 18th Corps by Monday night,[1] if you deem it practicable from the force you now have to seize and hold Petersburg, you may prepare to start on arrival of troops to hold your present lines. I do not want Petersburg visited, however, unless it is held, nor an attempt to take it, unless you feel a reasonable degree of confidence of success."[2]

In his letter of the same date to General Meade, General Grant says the 18th Corps was to make a rapid march with infantry alone to White House, losing no time for rest until they reach it, and there embark for City Point, but says nothing about the attack on Petersburg.[3]

These letters do not indicate that General Grant regarded the capture of Petersburg before it could be defended by General Lee's army, as a vital part of the flank movement. He did not order the capture at all hazards, but left it to the discretion of General Butler, after cautioning against the attempt unless very confident of succeeding. In fact, General Grant at that time

[1] We were not ordered to leave Cold Harbor until the night of the 12th, and could not arrive at Bermuda Hundred until Tuesday the 14th.

[2] *War Records*, vol. 69, p. 755.

[3] *Ib.*, p. 745. It is to be noted, however, that Smith's orders from Meade were "to proceed to Bermuda Hundred," not to City Point (*ib.*, p. 748).

was mainly anxious to get his army safely across the James River. Although General Grant's letter directed General Meade to have the 18th Corps make "a rapid march with infantry alone . . . losing no time for rest," there was nothing in General Meade's order of June 11 for the movement of the army indicating that the 18th Corps was to move any faster than the other corps.[1]

We all moved as rapidly as we could from Cold Harbor. But if I had had any reason to suppose that I was to be ordered to attack Petersburg, I should have had my troops disposed on the transports with a view to rapid debarkation and rapid concentration for a quick advance, and should have gone there in advance of my troops to study the maps and make other preparations. As it was, I considered it my duty to see that my troops came up promptly, and in consequence I did not arrive at Bermuda Hundred until sunset of the 14th.

Had General Grant on the 11th or 12th of June formed the plan for an attack on Petersburg by the 18th Corps, and so notified me, my forces could have moved upon the place several hours sooner than they did. But General Grant did not make his plan to capture Petersburg until the day when General Hoke was ordered by General Lee to "move at once as rapidly as possible with his division to Petersburg," [2] and

[1] *War Records*, vol. 69, p. 748. [2] See *ante*, p. 96.

until General Dearing had intrenched with his six guns in Baylor's field to retard the movement of our forces. The first orders to our troops to march to attack Petersburg were given later than the first order of General Lee to his forces to march to defend it.

This delay was one of the causes of the failure to capture Petersburg, and for it General Grant was alone responsible.

But there was another more direct cause of the failure. During the whole afternoon of the 15th of June, while I was anxiously marshaling my scanty forces, so as to break through the long lines of the enemy's fortifications, there was wandering aimlessly about, within about an hour's march of me, one of the most brilliant corps commanders in our army, with more than 20,000 veteran soldiers. General Hancock knew nothing of my operations, and I did not know of the presence of his troops until later in the day. General Grant says in his Memoirs[1] that "if General Hancock's orders of the 15th had been communicated to him, that officer, with his usual promptness, would undoubtedly have been upon the ground around Petersburg as early as four o'clock in the afternoon of the 15th. . . . I do not think there is any doubt that Petersburg itself could have been carried without much loss; or at least, if protected by inner detached works, that a line could have been established very

[1] Vol. 2, p. 298.

much in rear of the one then occupied by the enemy."

General Hancock in his report says:[1] "I informed the major general commanding the Army of the Potomac, on the morning of the 15th, that I was supplied with rations for one day, and had I then been notified that Petersburg was to be assaulted on the 15th, the delay occasioned by waiting for rations at Windmill Point would have been immaterial; but notwithstanding that delay I could have joined General Smith by marching directly toward him, at Petersburg, by 4 P. M."

General Hancock was severely criticised for his conduct on the 15th of June, and on the 26th he wrote a letter to General Meade asking for an investigation. General Meade forwarded the request to General Grant with this statement:[2]—

"Had Major-General Hancock and myself been apprised in time of the contemplated movement against Petersburg, and the necessity of his coöperation, I am of the opinion he could have been pushed much earlier to the scene of operations; but as matters occurred, and with our knowledge of them, I do not see how any censure can be attached to General Hancock and his corps."

This directly puts upon General Grant the responsibility of the failure to give General

[1] *War Records*, vol. 80, p. 304. [2] *Ib.*, p. 315.

Meade seasonable notice of the proposed attack by me.

In an unsigned letter[1] to General Meade, General Grant refused the investigation, giving as a reason that "the reputation of the Second Corps and its commander is so high, both with the public and in the army, that an investigation could not add to it. It cannot be tarnished by newspaper articles or scribblers. No official dispatch has ever been sent from these headquarters, which by any construction could cast blame on the Second Corps or its commander for the part they have played in this campaign." General Grant then added: "I am very much mistaken if you were not informed of the contemplated movement against Petersburg as soon as I returned to Wilcox's Landing from Bermuda Hundred, and that the object of getting the Second Corps up without waiting for the supply train to come up to issue rations to them was that they might be on hand, if required." But this statement apparently never reached General Meade. (See note at the foot of this page.)

In his report made July 22, 1865, General Grant made no reference to General Hancock's

[1] *War Records*, vol. 80, p. 315. This letter, as appears from a note by the editor of the *War Records*, "is in General Grant's handwriting, unsigned, and filed with General Hancock's letter of June 26, 1864. It does not appear in Letters-Sent Books, Headquarters Armies of the United States, or in the Letters-Received Books, Headquarters Army of the Potomac." There is, therefore, no reason to suppose that General Meade ever saw it.

delay, but merely says that he came up and offered his troops to me "just after dark." But in his Memoirs [1] he asserts that he directed General Meade to push forward Hancock's corps to Petersburg, "halting them, however, . . . until they could hear from Smith," and that if General Hancock's orders of the 15th had been communicated to him, he would have been on the ground as early as four o'clock, and Petersburg would have been captured. He thus puts the whole responsibility upon General Meade.

With reference to these records it seems fair to say (1) that if General Grant had given to General Meade these orders on the 14th of June, it is hardly conceivable that General Meade should on the 26th of the same month have stated to General Grant in writing that he never received them; (2) that it is hardly possible that if General Meade did receive such orders he should have failed to act upon them.

I have little doubt that if General Hancock had come up at four o'clock, or if he had made the assault as I requested him in a dispatch which he received at a few minutes after half past five o'clock, Petersburg would have been captured.

General Humphreys, in "The Virginia Campaign of 1864–1865," [2] assumes that General Grant neglected to give to General Meade notice of my attack, and explains it by supposing that

[1] Vol. 2, p. 294.

[2] Pp. 211, 213.

General Grant believed I was to have 14,000 infantry, and that my force would be sufficient to capture Petersburg.[1] This does not justify General Grant. He could not certainly know what troops were in Petersburg, or what troops I had, and the statements in his Memoirs and the recently published "War Records" show that he was misled as to both.

I have no doubt that General Grant was misled by General Butler as to the strength of the fortifications at Petersburg. General Butler in his letter to General Gillmore, dated June 11, 1864, shows that he utterly failed to understand the strength of the fortifications or the weight of the artillery with which they were manned.[2]

General Grant was also misinformed as to the number of the infantry in my command. He states in his Memoirs that I took all the troops I brought with me from Cold Harbor, reinforced by the cavalry under General Kautz and the division of General Hincks, while in fact my strongest division, under General Ames, was taken from me.

The "War Records" which I have quoted show that substantially the whole of the statement made by General Grant as to my operations on the 15th of June, by which he throws upon me the responsibility of the failure to take Petersburg, is untrue. I think it is also clear that his failure to mention Petersburg in his

[1] Humphreys, pp. 206, 213 n.

[2] *War Records*, vol. 68, p. 274.

written instructions to General Butler on the 2d of April,[1] his failure to give any orders to capture it until late on the 14th, and his neglect to notify General Meade that I was to make an assault on the 15th, were the real causes of the failure to capture it on that day.

By the 9th of July, 1864, after more than 10,000 men had been sacrificed in the vain attempt to capture Petersburg by assault, it was clear that a new army must be called for, and that weary months must elapse before it could take the field. The terrible consequences of the neglect to seize Petersburg before the arrival of the armies of Generals Beauregard and Lee were seen and realized by the whole nation. But what is now made known to the world by the publication of the "War Records," the want of foresight in General Grant in not sooner discovering the importance of Petersburg, and in not making earlier provisions for its capture, and his neglect to give to General Meade or General Hancock seasonable notice to coöperate with me on the 15th of June, were known only to a few.

But the whole chapter of mistakes was at the time clearly read by General Butler. Although on the 9th of May he had refused with scorn to listen to the suggestions of General Gillmore and myself that he should take it, he had learned later to appreciate the full value of Petersburg as a strategic point. He wished to attack it on

[1] See *ante*, p. 114.

the 28th of May when my army-corps was ordered to Cold Harbor. He had attempted to capture it with an inadequate force under General Gillmore on the 9th of June, and he had undoubtedly been watching with the keen eye of a sharp attorney for blunders on the part of the Lieutenant-General.

It is difficult to realize the position of General Grant at this time. The feeling against him in the North, especially among the friends of those slain in battle, who believed that there had been a brutal and reckless waste of human life, was intensely bitter. It is obvious from the dispatches in the "War Records" that he must have begun to feel that he was losing the confidence of the administration. The day he relieved me he asked for 300,000 more men.[1]

Two days before, on the 17th of July, 1864, with reference to a plan proposed by General Grant for getting a position which would "hold the enemy without the necessity of so many men," President Lincoln wrote to him: "Pressed as we are, by lapse of time, I am glad to hear you say this, and yet I do hope you may find a way *that the effort shall not be desperate in the sense of great loss of life.*"[2]

On the same 19th of July, soon after the time when nothing but a pure accident had prevented the capture of Washington by General Early,

[1] *War Records*, vol. 82, p. 332.
[2] *Ib.*, p. 289. The italics are mine.

General Halleck wrote a letter to General Grant in which he put many pertinent and embarrassing questions as to the safety of Washington and the possibility of supplying the waste of the army.[1]

When, six days later, on the 25th of July, General Grant sent General Rawlins, his chief of staff, with a special dispatch to President Lincoln, in which he suggested that General Meade should be relieved from the command of the Army of the Potomac and put in charge of a military division for the protection of Washington, the suggestion hardly received respectful consideration.[2]

By a dispatch from Secretary Stanton,[3] July 27, 1864, General Grant was notified that General Halleck was put in command of all the forces in the Middle Department, the Department of the Susquehanna, the Department of Washington, and the Department of West Virginia, all of which General Grant had proposed to put under General Meade.

At that gloomy time, the blackest in the history of the war, when General Grant's movements in the East had been attended with awful sacrifices of life and with little substantial success, an indictment against him, based upon these failures and a recurrence of his old habit, sup-

[1] *War Records*, vol. 82, p. 333.

[2] *Ib.*, p. 436. See letter of General Halleck of July 26, 1864 (*ib.*, p. 457).

[3] *Ib.*, p. 501.

ported by General Butler, might have swept him from power (see p. 31). General Butler knew this. As soon as he received Order No. 225, sending him to Fortress Monroe, he said at once to his staff, "I will have this changed."[1] He procured the interview with General Grant, and at once, as appears by the "War Records," the order was rescinded by General Grant, and General Butler sends a dispatch and exultingly describes himself as "Major General, Commanding all the troops of the Department of Virginia and North Carolina."

Upon these facts, about which there can be no controversy, several questions are suggested.

1. Why did General Grant, who, within a week, by strong representations that General Butler was incompetent to command, had induced the President to relieve him and to send him to Fortress Monroe, at once, after a single interview with General Butler, restore him to the command of his department, and enlarge it by the addition of another army corps?

2. Why did General Grant pass by General Franklin and General Reynolds, in whom, as well as in myself, he had written to General Halleck, he had confidence, and restore General Butler, in whom, as a commander in the field, he had written, by implication at least, that he had no confidence?

[1] See Appendix No. 6 for letter of Colonel Mordecai, relating what occurred. See, also, *ante*, p. 42.

3. Would any conduct of mine at Petersburg have furnished even a pretext for these acts?

4. Why did General Butler deny to General Weitzel that he had anything to do with my removal?

5. Why, if my conduct at Petersburg was the cause of my being relieved, did General Grant conceal the fact from me and from General Wilson, and give me only frivolous excuses?

6. Why did General Grant, in order to throw upon me the responsibility for the failure to capture Petersburg, in his report of July 22, 1865, so describe my operations on the 15th of June, that General Hincks declared that he must have been "purposely and maliciously misinformed," and so that even General Butler's notions of fairness were shocked, and he wrote to Dr. Suckley that he could aid me against the injustice? Why did General Grant, in his report of July 22, 1865, declare that I made the assault on Petersburg "with a part of his [my] command only," and say in his Memoirs[1] that I assaulted with colored troops only, when he knew every detail of the assault from a report and an examination made upon the ground the day after it occurred, and was perfectly aware that I used every man in my command, and that ten out of the sixteen guns captured were taken by white troops?

7. Why did General Grant, who, up to the

[1] Vol. 2, p. 295.

day of the interview with General Butler, with a full knowledge of all that I had done, had spoken of me in the strongest terms of commendation, personally interfere with President Lincoln to prevent my assignment to the command of the troops in the Department of the Gulf, when General Canby had without my solicitation earnestly requested it?

8. Why did General Butler in his book repeat the statements as to my conduct at Petersburg made by General Grant, when in his letter of March 14, 1866, he wrote to me that they misrepresented the facts?

I leave all these questions, and the questions whether I and the officers and men under me did all that was practicable to capture Petersburg on the 15th of June, 1864, to be answered by the impartial historian who shall study the history of the times in the light of the "War Records," when all the actors shall have passed away.

CHAPTER VII.

SERVICES UNDER GENERAL BUTLER IN MAY AND JUNE, 1864, AND WHAT HE SAID OF THEM AT THE TIME.

I HAVE now spoken of my relations to General Grant, and of the injurious statements in his reports and Memoirs, and have given a true narrative of the events therein referred to.

Let me now speak of my relations to General Butler, and his recent attack upon me in "Butler's Book." I need not say that I did not seek service under General Butler, but I have recently learned from the "War Records" that, as soon as he was put in command of the Department of Virginia and North Carolina, he sought, without my knowledge, to have me transferred from the Army of the Cumberland to his command. The following letter from Secretary Stanton explains itself: [1] —

WASHINGTON, *Nov.* 18, 1863, 10.05 A. M.

MAJOR-GENERAL BUTLER, — The services of W. F. Smith, now chief of engineers in the Army of the Cumberland, *are indispensable in that command*, and it will be impossible to assign him to your department.

EDWIN M. STANTON, Secretary of War.

[1] *War Records*, vol. 56, p. 182. The italics are mine.

I was assigned to his command early in April of 1864, but as I was engaged in organizing and drilling my troops during that month, I had little to do with him until we landed at Bermuda Hundred on the 5th of May. From that time until the 24th of May I was in command of the 18th Corps, and was fighting most of the time. The result was a failure; but General Butler told Generals Meigs and Barnard, who came on the 25th of May to investigate the cause of it, that "he was satisfied with the ability and aid of General William F. Smith." This was at a time when it was his duty to make charges if he had any to make. Subsequently I was sent to Cold Harbor, and only returned on the 14th of June to make the assault on Petersburg. On the 21st of June he addressed me as a "meritorious and able officer," for whom he had the highest respect. In a letter to Dr. Suckley, the Medical Director of the 18th Corps, dated January 31, 1866, which I have already quoted, General Butler writes of me, "You already know my opinion of General Smith, — one that I have never changed. A good soldier, and an honest and reliable gentleman, with the same faults of temper I myself have."

So far as I am personally concerned I might safely rely upon these expressions of opinion, made at the time or after all my relations with General Butler had terminated, and save myself the trouble of answering nearly seventy pages of

malignant attacks made nearly thirty years after the events on which they are based, and for which the best apology is that the infirmities of age had come upon the author. But his malignity did not spare the dead. And I have thought that perhaps my duty to them and to those who may come after me, calls upon me to throw light on the character of the book by exposing the false and malicious character of the charges which it contains.

Among others he has made a brutal and unjust attack upon the memory of General Quincy Adams Gillmore, who was in command of the 10th Corps. He charges him with cowardice, with disobedience of orders, and with attempting to defeat the plans of his superior officers, and with a willful refusal to aid me while I was in command of the 18th Corps, which was attempting to coöperate with the 10th Corps. I was in perfectly friendly relations with General Gillmore, and wish to declare that in my judgment there was not the slightest foundation for any one of these charges.

On the 30th of May, 1864, General Gillmore wrote a letter to General Halleck in which was the following clause: —

"No one is more mortified than myself at the unsuccessful result of operations here. . . . I am deeply chagrined at the tone the public press has adopted toward General Butler, and the manner in which they try and mix me up with

it. . . . I have given General Butler a most cordial support throughout, and he knows it." [1]

I have no doubt that this last statement was true. General Gillmore was graduated at West Point with high honors. At the outbreak of the war he was a captain of engineers. Without the aid of political influence, as a reward for valuable services, he had been appointed Major-General of Volunteers, and been placed in command of a corps. By his skill as an engineer he had captured Fort Pulaski. He afterwards had charge of the operations in Charleston Harbor. When he was assigned to General Butler's command his reputation was without a blemish. General Butler's impracticable plan for capturing Richmond had disgracefully failed; it had cost us thousands of veteran soldiers, as brave and as well disciplined as any in the army. Instead of assuming the responsibility for the failure, as he should have done, he tries to throw it upon General Gillmore.[2]

[1] *War Records*, vol. 69, p. 369.

[2] There are amusing illustrations of General Butler's weakness in this respect in his book. On page 627 he describes with enthusiasm his plan for seizing Bermuda Hundred and City Point, and tells the reader how he showed *his* plans to General Grant and gave all the details. He then says, "Grant was very much struck with my views thus given and the information thus imparted. After a full consideration, he said he thought such a plan should be adopted, and he approved of it."

On page 664, after the failure of his expedition, he writes: "I was where I was in direct obedience to the plan of campaign to which I was confined by the orders of General Grant." General Grant's written orders, as I have already stated, show that every

Throughout his work whenever anything went wrong, and nearly all his efforts in war did go wrong, he finds somebody to abuse. Most of those in the army and navy with whom he had relations seem in his eyes to have been conspiring against him. That he did not at the time charge me with any default, but said he was satisfied with what I had done, was quite remarkable. He says that General Gillmore and I quarreled and tried to obstruct each other and defeat the plans of the General-in-Chief. This is utterly false; we both of us coöperated with each other, and supported General Butler to the full extent of our ability. We could not always effectively coöperate because we had no competent commander over us.

step in the campaign was in violation of those orders; but this quotation is introduced here merely to show some of General Butler's mental and moral qualities.

CHAPTER VIII.

PROOF FROM THE "WAR RECORDS" THAT GENERAL BUTLER'S STATEMENTS WITH REFERENCE TO ME IN HIS BOOK ARE FALSE.

One of the most flagrant charges made against me is on pages 665, 666, of "Butler's Book." He says that "on the morning of the 20th [May], Beauregard with a large force made a very vigorous attempt to force our lines, striking, as he naturally would, at the weakest point. . . . They were met by the troops of the Tenth Corps, who steadily held their position and repulsed each attempt to dislodge them." He then says that he was under the impression that it was possible that the left of the 10th Corps might be obliged to give way; that there was no movement against Smith's front, although his troops were in line of battle; that a very daring charge upon our lines was made under the leadership of Brigadier-General Walker, who fell with desperate wounds from which he soon after died; that he then sent one of his aides to General Smith with directions to have his right division under General Brooks march by his right flank to the rear of Gillmore's left division, which was bearing the brunt

of the attack; that on receiving the order from the staff officer I replied, "Damn Gillmore; he has got himself into a scrape, — let him get out of it the best way he can." General Butler says he then rode to Brooks's line (Brooks being in command of a division under me), and gave the order to him, and told him to execute it without waiting to hear from General Smith; that he then came to me, and reproved me for my answer, and ordered me to see in person that General Brooks made the movement; that General Brooks did make the movement; that the efforts of the enemy were weakened and after a while ceased.

The charges are in substance (1) that General Gillmore's main line was attacked and was in peril, (2) that I had troops which I could safely spare to assist him, (3) that I refused to assist him when ordered so to do, using at the time improper language, (4) that General Butler thereupon ordered General Brooks, who commanded some of my troops, to move to Gillmore's assistance, (5) that he did move, and rendered the desired assistance. If this were true, I deserved not reproof, but a court martial, and a discharge from the service at least. But fortunately, the transactions of that day are carefully reported in the recently printed "War Records," which General Butler did not see before writing, and they show that every statement made by him is false.

The record of the day begins on page 34 of vol. 69 of the "War Records." At that time we had returned after the battle of Drewry's Bluff, and were at work strengthening our intrenchments to protect Bermuda Hundred. The enemy were along our whole front, and had attacked and captured rifle-pits held by skirmishers in front of General Gillmore and on his right.

The following dispatches show what occurred: —

May 20, 1864, 11.40 A. M. (Received 11.43 A. M.)

GENERAL GILLMORE, — I think your skirmish line near Widow Howlett's should be reëstablished. It is important for reasons in which you concur that line should be held. It was too easily lost.

BENJ. F. BUTLER,
Major-General Commanding.[1]

HEADQUARTERS TENTH ARMY CORPS, *May* 20, 1864.

COLONEL SHAFFER, Chief of Staff, Dep't of Virginia and North Carolina.

COLONEL, — I find the enemy in strong force and am losing heavily. *The left* seems to be safe enough. A prisoner says their line runs from one river to the other, with rifle pits, &c., and the number supposed to be there, is about 20,000 men. I think if you wish the *attack pushed*, I should have more troops. General

[1] *War Records*, vol. 69, p. 34.

Terry has just informed me that the right of his picket-line is threatened by a mass of troops said to be a brigade.

Very respectfully yours,
Q. A. GILLMORE,
Major-General Commanding.[1]

4.45 P. M.

GENERAL SMITH, — You will send two brigades to the relief of General Gillmore.

BENJ. F. BUTLER,
Major-General Commanding.[2]

HEADQUARTERS EIGHTEENTH ARMY CORPS,
May 20, 1864, 4.55 P. M.

I have one regiment not in line. Every regiment beyond that leaves a gap in my line. I shall give the orders to get ready, but shall not order them to report till I get other notice.

WM. F. SMITH, Major-General.[3]

May 20, 1864.

GENERAL SMITH, — Keep your brigades in readiness until further orders.

BENJ. F. BUTLER,
Major-General Commanding.[4]

HEADQUARTERS, *May* 20, 1864.

MAJOR-GENERAL SMITH, — The brigades ordered to Gillmore will not be wanted. General

[1] *War Records*, vol. 69, p. 36. The italics are mine.
[2] *Ib.*, p. 36. [3] *Ib.*, p. 36. [4] *Ib.*, p. 40.

Butler wishes that you would charge your division commanders to make every provision against surprise to-night.

J. W. Shaffer,
Colonel and Chief of Staff.[1]

Headquarters Tenth Army Corps,
May 20, 1864, 5.15 p. m.

Major-General Butler, — I have my trenches now garrisoned by the minimum force to make them safe. One full brigade at least should be sent to me in order to drive the enemy from the rifle pits they captured this morning. If it is sent at once to replace my troops in the intrenchments, I will take off the latter and recapture the position lost this morning.

Q. A. Gillmore,
Major-General Commanding.[2]

H'dq'rs Dept. of Virginia and North Carolina,
In the Field, Va., *May* 20, 1864, 5.30 p. m.

General Gillmore, — If with the force you have you have been unable to force your line back, I think it may cost too much risk to attempt it farther with the force which can be sent from General Smith's line. Can you hold what you have? Are the enemy pressing you if you retire?

Benj. F. Butler,
Major-General Commanding.[3]

[1] *War Records*, vol. 69, p. 40. [2] *Ib.*, p. 36.
[3] *Ib.*, p. 37.

GILLMORE'S HEADQUARTERS,
May 20, 1864, 12.10 P. M. [12.10 A. M., 21*st*].

MAJOR-GENERAL BUTLER, — I omitted to report that Brigadier-General Walker, of the rebel service, is wounded and a prisoner in charge of my medical director.

Q. A. GILLMORE, Major-General.[1]

The records on both sides show that only an attack was made on the picket on May 20.

In the Itinerary of the 10th Corps, from May 5 to June 12, the record of May 20 is as follows: "May 16, Repulsed repeated attacks of the enemy and retired to intrenchments; *numerous skirmishes on the picket line during the remainder of the month.*" This is the only notice taken of the attack of May 20.[2]

General Gillmore in his original report, dated May 25, 1864, writes:[3] "On the 20th a vigorous attack was made *on my pickets*, and possession gained of the advance rifle pits on General Ames's front and a portion of General Terry's. General Ames attempted to recover his ground, but failed. On General Terry's front the line was reëstablished by Colonel Howell's brigade, after a severe and sanguinary fight."[4]

[1] *War Records*, vol. 69, p. 34.

[2] *Ib.*, vol. 68, p. 40.

[3] *Ib.*, p. 40. The italics are mine.

[4] The record also shows that the fighting on the 20th of May was not severe enough to prevent General Butler's proposing at 12.45 P. M. to meet Admiral Lee at Bermuda Landing and bring him up for a conference and to luncheon with him. See *War Records*, vol. 69, p. 29.

General Beauregard in a letter to President Davis, dated May 21, 1864, writes:[1] "I succeeded yesterday, after a severe struggle, in obtaining the shortest defensive line in front of his [the enemy's] works, which extend from the James River to the Appomattox."

The records thus on both sides show clearly that the attack was only made on our skirmishers to seize our advance rifle-pits in order to secure the rebels the best line for their intrenchments; that no attack was made on our line of battle or intrenchments; that General Gillmore did not ask for troops to defend his line, but to attack the enemy and retake the rifle-pits; that when I was ordered to send two brigades to support General Gillmore, I immediately ordered them to get ready, but as General Butler was within ten minutes' distance from me and there was ample time to have the order repeated before I could prepare to move the troops, I reported to him my exact condition, so that he could understand the risk of taking a part of my force and leaving a gap in my line of defense, and I told him I should not move them until I received further notice. This was clearly my duty. General Butler thereupon sent me an order to keep my brigades in readiness until further orders, and subsequently sent a dispatch stating that "the brigades ordered to Gillmore will not be wanted." In a later dispatch to General Gillmore he gave the reason that "it

[1] *War Records*, vol. 69, p. 818.

may cost too much risk to attempt it further with the force which can be sent from General Smith's line."

I think now that I have justified the assertion that every material statement by General Butler relating to this matter is untrue. (1) General Gillmore's main line was not attacked, but only his picket line, and he did not want troops for defense, but only in case he should be ordered to attack. (2) I had no troops which could be safely spared to aid General Gillmore, and General Butler so decided and revoked the order as soon as I notified him of the state of my lines. (3) That I did not refuse to send the troops, but instantly on receiving the order prepared to move them. (4) That General Butler did not thereupon personally order my troops to move to General Gillmore's support, but told me in writing to wait, and finally revoked the order he had given me. (5) That no troops from my lines moved to the aid of General Gillmore, and that General Butler's statement that Brooks's division crossed under the cover of a knoll to help General Gillmore is pure fiction with no basis of fact. As to the offensive remark which I am charged with making to General Butler's aide, I can only say that it is impossible that I could have said anything in spirit or substance like what is reported.[1] The

[1] To cap the climax it may be stated that General Walker was not mortally wounded, but was quite recently alive and well.

order was in writing as an indorsement on Gillmore's note, which was a request for troops contingent upon Butler's *desiring the attack pushed*. The whole story of the verbal order of the aide and my reply is thus shown to be utterly false. At that time if General Gillmore's lines had been carried it would have been fatal to my own. I was intensely anxious, after what I had seen of our leadership, for the safety of the whole army, and should have done all in my power to save any part of it. I know I never could have used any language which showed indifference to the safety of General Gillmore's corps.

The next item of evidence to show that General Gillmore and I did not coöperate, which General Butler produces, is a letter addressed to him on the 10th of May, 1864. I insert the letter here:[1] —

HEADQUARTERS EIGHTEENTH CORPS.
May 10, 1864.

MAJOR GENERAL BUTLER, Commanding Department.

GENERAL, — I have the honor to state that yesterday evening I requested Major-General Gillmore to relieve General Heckman's brigade, which has been fighting three days out of the four that we have been here, by a brigade of General Turner's division, stating at the time that I had no troops not actually in the presence of the enemy, and that I was anxious to give

[1] *War Records*, vol. 68, p. 623.

General Heckman a chance to make some coffee for his men, which they could not do on the front. This request was denied. Later in the evening upon being informed by General Gillmore that our rear was threatened by infantry and cavalry, I requested General Gillmore to give me one regiment to guard the roads leading to the rear of my lines, stating at the time that I had no regiment that I could safely withdraw from my front, for this duty. Still later in the night, at a time when I thought General Burnham was being driven back, and knowing that the safety of our command depended, in a great measure, upon that position being held, to save time I sent direct to General Turner asking him to give me two regiments to aid General Brooks to maintain that position. I have, therefore, now, respectfully to request in accordance with the usages of military service that General Heckman's brigade be relieved by troops that have not been sent to the front, at once.

Very respectfully,

WM. F. SMITH, Major-General.

To one not familiar with military usages, and reading it by itself, it may convey the impression that General Gillmore did not cordially coöperate with me. It ought not to convey that impression, and was not intended by me when written to convey it. I did not intend to criticise General Gillmore or General Turner; I

intended simply to impress upon General Butler what I had stated in another letter written the same day, that there must be one man to command that army. In my letter written on the morning of May 10,[1] in answer to the insulting letter which he had written to General Gillmore and myself in reply to our suggestion that he should cross the Appomattox and cut the railroads there and take Petersburg, I had written as follows: [From] "pure consideration for the troops here and the cause in which we are engaged, it becomes my duty to you to express the opinion that the withdrawal from this point must be made in accordance with some well-regulated plan published from headquarters of the army, and not according to the separate wishes and interests of corps commanders."

The relations between General Gillmore and myself must be explained. Each of us was in command of his own corps. Neither had any authority to command the other. I could request assistance from him or he from me, but neither had a right to comply with the request of the other unless in his judgment it was reasonable. When I asked for troops from General Gillmore, he was in the right in refusing to grant my request if he thought he needed the troops, or if they were employed, or even if he preferred to have an order from the commanding general. Each one of us was fully occupied with his own

[1] *War Records*, vol. 68, p. 624.

corps. It was impossible to confer together constantly so as to coöperate; the loss of time necessary for that might cost us a battle. We might not agree as to policy. No army ever did or ever will do good work under two commanders with equal powers. On the 9th of May we had been four days under General Butler, and had been reconnoitring in the neighborhood, and I had formed decided opinions upon two questions: (1) That the country with its creeks and ravines,[1] with Petersburg in the enemy's hands on our left flank, was impracticable for an aggressive campaign against Richmond with the force General Butler could command; (2) that General Butler must actually take command of the army in order to make it effective.

Accordingly, on the morning of May 10, I had closed my letter as I have stated.

In order still further to impress General Butler with the importance of that last clause, I gave him my experience with Generals Gillmore and Turner on the 9th, and again asked him to take charge of the matter and issue commands "according to the usage of military service."

General Gillmore and I were in friendly conference on the 9th and joined in the respectful letter to General Butler, suggesting that the

[1] This view was concurred in by a board of engineers, appointed by General Grant in July to ascertain whether it was practicable to attack Petersburg from the west side of the Appomattox. See *War Records*, vol. 82, pp. 416, 424.

army should cross the Appomattox and capture Petersburg, as we supposed for the good of the service, but General Butler treated it as an attempt to "thwart and interfere with him." General Gillmore, in his letter in reply to General Butler's letter to us, made a similar suggestion as to the need of a commander. He wrote:[1] "Further orders from you, regulating the movements of the two corps, seem necessary." He was as anxious as I was to have a general at the head to issue commands.

General Butler did not attempt to move with the army until the 12th. He writes: "For good and sufficient reasons, although it called me to abandon my base temporarily, I came to the conclusion to take command in person of this movement, so that nothing should be lost because of any disagreement between my corps commanders, neither of whom really desired that the other should succeed."[2] This was written after both General Gillmore and myself had in writing suggested the necessity of his taking command, and shows better than anything I could have written his utter incapacity and want of appreciation of his position. It means that from the 5th to the 12th of May the army had been in the field without a commander. General Gillmore commanded the 10th Corps, and I commanded the 18th Corps, but there was no commander of the whole. That was practi-

[1] *War Records*, vol. 68, p. 36. [2] *Butler's Book*, p. 651.

cally the case to the end of that campaign, and one of the causes of its failure.

It will naturally be asked how it was that General Butler, who was undoubtedly a man of ability, should have so utterly failed as a general in the field in every instance from Big Bethel to Fort Fisher. The answer is that his mental habits and long training principally as a criminal lawyer tended to unfit him for field service. The first step in preparing for a battle is to examine as far as possible the field of operations. I never knew General Butler to reconnoitre a field in person. It was his delight to have spies and detectives everywhere, and to spend his days and nights at his "base of operations," cross-examining prisoners and deserters. I have no doubt that he did it well, although at times, as his dispatches show, he was woefully deceived.

This made him efficient in large cities like New York or New Orleans, where he was practically at the head of an armed police, and where his services depended largely upon information coming from detectives. It is hardly conceivable that during the two expeditions against Petersburg, the first by General Gillmore on the 9th of June, and mine on the 15th, any general should have been content to sit perched up in an observatory, nearly two hundred feet high, eight or ten miles from the field of operations. Think what glory General Butler might have won by leading the little army of General Gill-

more on the 9th of June, or mine on the 15th, and by rushing over the fortifications at Petersburg without wasting time for a reconnoissance, and pushing on to the Appomattox "in daylight or in dark." Think of General Andrew Jackson, for whom General Butler seems to have had a personal and hereditary admiration, whining all day in a watch-tower, while he was waiting for a general, whom he says he knew to be incompetent to capture fortifications, not ten miles away. When in the morning he received a dispatch from General Gillmore, complaining that the tramp of the cavalry in crossing the bridge had been heard by the enemy, which, General Butler says, convinced him that General Gillmore would accomplish nothing, why did he not then spring to his saddle, summon his staff, and gallop to the head of the column? Half an hour would have brought him there.[1]

This prudence of General Butler, combined with an overmastering vanity, which would not permit him to accept a suggestion from any one, accounts in part for his failure. The case was even worse than this; his vanity and irritability were such that he seemed to regard any suggestion, however respectfully made, as an insult, or an attempt to thwart him, and he replied accordingly. This, of course, prevented his receiving suggestions as he otherwise would. As I write

[1] Think also of Napoleon at Lodi, and Blücher charging with his cavalry at Ligny two days before the battle of Waterloo.

this it seems to me incredible that such vanity, such unwillingness to accept suggestions, should have been developed in any human being. Under other circumstances it would have been ludicrous; it might have been harmless and amusing. I think I can appreciate the enthusiasm which his wit, smartness, and grotesque figure inspired in a crowd. But as I saw him in 1864, his vanity, irritability, and incompetence were costing us the lives of thousands of brave and patriotic men.

I might stop here, but there are other statements respecting me which the records show to be false, and there are some instances to which I must call attention, in which he seems willfully to have falsified the records in order to make a case against me.

On the 21st of June there was a correspondence between us which led me to ask to be relieved from duty in his department. The charge in his letter of that date was that a column of my corps under General Martindale, which was ordered to move at daylight in the cool of the morning, was at nine o'clock just passing his headquarters in the heat of the day. The letter seemed to me to contain an implied threat of dismissal against the officer who was responsible for the act. As there had been no order that the column should move at daybreak, and as it was moving properly at the right time and place exactly as I had ordered it, I was justly indig-

nant. As I had long felt that I could be of no real service under General Butler, I at once asked to be relieved. The correspondence is printed in the Appendix No. 5.[1]

The "War Records" show exactly what the facts were, and I quote the dispatches.

HEADQUARTERS, *June* 20, 1864.

BRIG.-GEN. R. S. FOSTER, — You will hold your command in readiness to move at a moment's notice, with two days' rations and 100 rounds of ammunition, to occupy a point on the north side of the James River near Deep Bottom.

. . . . . .

BENJ. F. BUTLER,
Major-General Commanding.[2]

HEADQUARTERS,
JONES' NECK, *June* 20, 1864, 10.10 P. M.

COL. J. W. SHAFFER, Chief of Staff: —

My column has commenced crossing. I shall get about 1,200 across in the first boats.

Respectfully yours,
R. S. FOSTER, Brigadier-General.[3]

[1] The irritation exhibited in my reply to General Butler may seem excessive, and perhaps was; but I distrusted General Butler to the last degree. He had just succeeded in depriving General Gillmore of his command of the 10th Corps, which I thought unjust, and so his complimentary phrases produced anger, and what I considered a direct threat against me made me yield to my wrath and send the letter, which, I admit, was not in accordance with military discipline. The fact is, that I had worked out the order of march of the divisions to have the march made with the least possible fatigue and discomfort to the men, and was rather proud of my success in that especial case.

[2] *War Records*, vol. 81, p. 262. [3] *Ib.*, p. 264.

H'DQ'RS DEPT. OF VIRGINIA AND NORTH CAROLINA.
IN THE FIELD, *June* 20, 1864, 7.30 P. M.

MAJOR-GENERAL SMITH, — You will get all the troops of Eighteenth Corps *ready to cross* the Appomattox at daylight to-morrow morning. I have ordered General Brooks to relieve all the troops of your command from the lines. Any of the troops of the Tenth Corps that you may have you will order to report to General Brooks at once. You will take two batteries of artillery with your corps. More specific orders will be sent you during the night.

By order of GENERAL BUTLER:

J. W. SHAFFER,
Colonel and Chief of Staff.[1]

HEADQUARTERS EIGHTEENTH ARMY CORPS,
June 20, 1864.

BRIG. GEN. G. J. STANNARD, Commanding First Division: —

GENERAL, — You will please have your command in readiness to move to-morrow, A. M. at daylight. Special orders will be sent you during the night.

By command of MAJ. GEN. W. F. SMITH.

N. BOWEN,
Major and Assistant Adjutant-General.

Same to Generals Martindale and Ames.[2]

[1] *War Records*, vol. 81, p. 264. The italics are mine.
[2] *Ib.*, p. 265.

General Butler's Headquarters,
June 20, 1864. (Received 7.15 P. M.)

General Brooks, — You will relieve all the troops of Eighteenth Corps now on the line, as that corps is under orders to march to Petersburg to-night. You will have to occupy the entire line with Tenth Corps.

By order of General Butler.

J. W. Shaffer, Colonel, &c.[1]

Headquarters Eighteenth Corps,
June 20, 1864.

General Stannard, Commanding First Division: —

General, — The general commanding directs that your command be furnished to-night with sixty rounds of ammunition and three days' rations on the men's persons. At 4 A. M. to-morrow you will move across the Appomattox by the Spring Hill road to the front of Petersburg, where you will relieve General Wright's (Sixth) corps, commencing at his right. General Martindale will be on your left. Two batteries will report to you at the bridge to follow the rear of your column. Your ordnance and ambulance trains will follow in rear of the corps.

Respectfully, &c.,

N. Bowen, Assistant Adjutant-General.[2]

[1] *War Records*, vol. 81, p. 261. [2] *Ib.*, p. 266.

HEADQUARTERS EIGHTEENTH CORPS,
June 20, 1864.

GENERAL MARTINDALE, Commanding Second Division: —

GENERAL, — The general commanding directs that your men be supplied to-night with sixty rounds of ammunition and three days' rations on person. At 7.30 A. M. to-morrow you will move your command by Spring Hill to the front of Petersburg, where you will relieve the troops of the Sixth Corps, taking your position on General Stannard's left, and the colored division will then come in on your left. Ambulance, ordnance, and forage trains, &c., will move in rear of corps. The colored troops will move before you, but you will go into position before them.

Respectfully, &c.,

N. BOWEN, Assistant Adjutant General.[1]

HEADQUARTERS EIGHTEENTH CORPS,
June 20, 1864.

GENERAL HINCKS, Commanding Division: —

GENERAL, — The general commanding directs that you furnish your men to-night with three days' rations and sixty rounds of cartridges on person. At 5.30 A. M. to-morrow you will move across the Appomattox by Spring Hill road to Petersburg front, where you will wait till the division of General Martindale passes you. You will then go on his left to relieve the troops of

[1] *War Records*, vol. 81, p. 266.

Sixth Corps. Your ordnance, ambulance, and forage trains, &c., will move in rear of the whole corps.

Respectfully, &c.,
N. Bowen, Assistant Adjutant General.[1]

These records show that *General Foster* was ordered to move to the north *across James River to Deep Bottom* to capture that place in the evening of the 20th, and that *the three divisions of the Eighteenth Corps* were ordered *to be ready* at daylight of the 21st to move to the south *across the Appomattox to Petersburg*, and were to have further specific orders. But as they could not all cross the bridge at once, to prevent confusion and to save the men from the fatigue which comes from standing about heavily loaded with knapsacks, I in special orders directed General Stannard to start at four o'clock, General Hincks at 5.30, and General Martindale to move at 7.30. He was moving as ordered, and all arrived at Petersburg long before they could take their places in the intrenchments, which they could not do until after dark.

But General Butler, when he came to write his book, in his eagerness to make a case, referring to me, writes as follows: "We went on, nothing further coming up to cause any disagreement until a demonstration was ordered by General Grant to be made from Bermuda Hundred across

[1] *War Records*, vol. 81, p. 266.

the James to seize and hold Deep Bottom. This was to be done by *a surprise early in the morning*, and I ordered that the movement should be made by the several divisions of the Tenth and Eighteenth Corps at daybreak. Colonel Foster of the Tenth Corps got there with his troops in time, and the movement was successful. Late that morning I saw General Martindale's brigade pass my headquarters, having to march a large seven miles before he could reach with his command the point at which he was to take part in the movement. If Smith, his immediate commander, had sent Martindale his orders, as they were given him, then here was a very gross dereliction of duty in not moving when ordered." [1]

Every substantial statement affecting my command contained in this clause is shown by the "War Records," which I have quoted, to be untrue. General Butler did not order the several divisions or any division in the 18th Corps to move to Deep Bottom at daybreak or at any other time. He ordered about 1,600 men of the 10th Corps under General Foster to move there, and they did move early in the evening. If there had been an order for a concerted movement of the several divisions of the 18th Corps at daybreak, and General Martindale was moving at nine o'clock, either he or I would have been gravely in fault, and I think I am justified in saying that General Butler invented this false

[1] *Butler's Book*, p. 693. The italics are mine.

statement to charge me with fault, with the belief that it would never be answered or that his readers would never see the reply. For making every allowance for the lapse of time and the infirmities of age, it is hardly possible that General Butler could so far forget as to suppose that he sent two army corps to capture Deep Bottom, instead of one small brigade of 1,600 men under General Foster.

The number of petty attempts to deceive are too numerous to mention and hardly worthy of notice. As an illustration, with reference to the events of May 16, 1864, he writes (page 658): "At the suggestion of General Weitzel, General Smith had ordered the front of his corps to be protected by telegraph wires taken from the poles of the lines along the railroad. . . . This wire was strung at such a height that the enemy making a charge in the night would assuredly stumble over it and be thrown down in masses within some fifty yards of the muzzles of our guns. That order was carefully and properly executed by Weitzel and Brooks in the front. . . . Heckman's brigade and Weitzel's division held the extreme right. For some reason never yet satisfactorily explained, the putting up of that wire, which events proved would have been of the greatest security, was neglected in front of Heckman's brigade, the extreme and exposed right of the line. . . . But there was none whatever there. . . . I have seen in one of the many

publications of Smith on this subject that he says it was because there was not enough wire with which to do it. How that can be I do not understand, for there was nine miles of that wire to be had for the taking, and the time in which to do it was more than ample. In one of his later publications Smith says that no wire was ordered to be put in front of Heckman's brigade, and Heckman in his report speaks of no order to put the wire in his front. If there was no order given to have it done, it is very clear the order should have been given."

The obvious purpose of this narrative is to make it appear, (1) that General Weitzel, and not I, suggested the device of placing the wire; (2) that Heckman's brigade and Weitzel's division were separate commands, and that I ought to have given orders to each of them; and (3) that I failed to give an order to Heckman to put the wire in his front, by which neglect came disaster to our troops.

There is not the slightest foundation for either of these assertions. The use of the wire was an original device of my own, and I gave the order or suggestion to Brooks and Weitzel, and it was of great service in protecting their troops. Heckman's brigade was a part of Weitzel's division, and Weitzel gave the order to Heckman, who failed to obey it. All this clearly appears in General Weitzel's report made May 22, 1864. He says: "Breastworks of logs

had been constructed during the day by my order along my whole front, and, at the suggestion of the Major-General commanding the corps, I ordered telegraph wire to be stretched a short distance in front of this breastwork and wound tightly around stumps, &c. This was done, except in Heckman's front, and proved of immense service. Why Heckman did not do it I do not know; he received the order." [1]

It is a petty attempt to relieve General Heckman of responsibility for not obeying an order by charging me with neglect for not giving it. Brooks and Weitzel testify to the ease with which they repulsed the attack in their front owing to the use of the wire.

The disaster was the almost inevitable result of leaving a gap of fully a mile between the right of General Weitzel's line and the river, with nothing but a line of cavalry vedettes to protect it. The whole of my force was stretched out in a single line, with no second line and reserve. I repeatedly called General Butler's attention to the peril we were in. The position in which General Butler had placed his army on the 14th of May had no parallel in our war, except perhaps at Big Bethel. General Weitzel in his report of May 22, 1864, wrote: "The whole of my command (eleven regiments) was stretched out in a single line, with no second line and reserve. My left rested on the main turnpike

[1] *War Records*, vol. 68, pp. 151, 152.

road, and my right barely lapped over the direct road to camp, which I was ordered to cover. Between my right and the river, a distance fully three quarters of a mile, was nothing but a line of cavalry vedettes, and in front of my right and these cavalry vedettes was a large open plain in which 50,000 men could be massed. I represented the state of affairs repeatedly during the thirty-six hours preceding the attack by the enemy. I was close up to the enemy's works. I was so impressed with my danger that, without any orders, I constructed a rude breastwork of logs along my whole front on the day before the attack, and ordered telegraph wire to be stretched in front of this work and wound tightly around stumps, &c., the latter at the suggestion of General Smith. On the afternoon preceding the attack, General Smith, General Heckman, and myself crept out to a farm-house which was in front of my right in the open field, and about midway between the lines, and by General Smith's orders, I put sixty men in that farm-house to hold it, to strengthen our right. The four regiments of Heckman's brigade were crushed by the attack, but there was no surprise on account of the fog, as the whole line was in line of battle and prepared for the shock, having several times received warning from the farm-house. The seven other regiments of my line did not move until (after they had thrice repulsed the enemy with terrible slaughter, he

being piled in heaps over the telegraph wire) they were ordered to fall back."[1]

In "Butler's Book," page 663, an account of the attack is given, in which Heckman says, "In the afternoon General Smith visited my line, and everything having been explained to him, he seemed to realize our peril, as no military man could help doing, and exclaimed, 'Heckman, this is fearful!'" This shows how I felt with reference to our position, but I had no power to change it.

There is one other illustration of General Butler's petty attempts to deceive, which is perhaps worse than this, because it involves a falsification of a record.

I have already (*ante*, p. 47) stated that on July 1, 1864, General Hancock complained to General Meade that a letter purporting to have been written at General Butler's headquarters (which were about seven miles from my own), and containing false statements as to his operations on the 15th of June before Petersburg, had been printed in the "New York Tribune." The complaint was the same day forwarded to General Grant, with a statement that it was written by a Mr. Kent, who was within the control of General Butler.[2] July 2, 1864, General Grant wrote to General Meade: "I have directed General Butler to have Kent, the 'Tribune' correspondent, arrested and sent to these headquarters."[3] The same day,

[1] *War Records*, vol. 68, p. 150. [2] *Ib.*, vol. 81, p. 567.
[3] *Ib.*, p. 583.

July 2, General Grant wrote to General Meade, "On inquiry, Mr. Kent is found to have gone North. I have directed notice to be sent to him that his pass to visit this army is revoked, and that he will not be allowed to return." [1]

Whether General Butler had any reason for preferring to have Mr. Kent go North and not have an interview with General Grant, and connived at his escape, must be left to conjecture. He certainly did not do it to protect me.[2] But it clearly appears by the records that General Grant did not see Kent. It also appears that four days after this, on the 6th of July, he requested my assignment to the command of the

[1] *War Records*, vol. 81, p. 583.

[2] General Butler's headquarters had already gained some reputation in connection with the correspondent of the *Tribune*. The following letter of Admiral Lee speaks for itself (*War Records*, vol. 69, p. 76). The italics are mine.

FLAG-SHIP AGAWAM,
AIKEN'S LANDING, *May* 21, 1864, 4.30 P. M.

HON. GIDEON WELLES, Secretary of the Navy : —

. . . The statement by the special correspondent of the *Tribune*, professedly written from General Butler's headquarters, that General Butler sent his aide, Major Ludlow, to ask me to coöperate in the attack on Fort Darling, is entirely untrue. General Butler never gave me any notice of his intended movement against Fort Darling, and never asked me for any coöperation against Fort Darling. To-day General Butler gave me to understand *that his attack on Fort Darling was a feint.*

S. P. LEE, Acting Rear-Admiral.

This so-called feint was the operation for which General Butler asked the President to give him the commission as Major-General in the regular army, to date from May 16, 1861. See *War Records*, vol. 68, p. 858.

troops of the department of Virginia and North Carolina.[1]

In "Butler's Book," page 715, he says: "Before the 2d of July, Grant learned that Smith had, in addition to his abuse of Meade, . . . induced a 'Tribune' correspondent to publish a libel upon Hancock. Grant gave me an order to arrest the correspondent and send him to him. Thereupon Grant caused the order in favor of Smith to be suspended." In order to conceal his falsehood, and make it more difficult to contradict it, General Butler falsifies the dispatch from General Grant to him by striking out the name Kent, and leaving the name blank. He writes, "General Grant obtained an interview with Mr. , and upon an examination sent him from the army, being satisfied that he wrote the article with the knowledge of Smith."[2]

I need not repeat, and the record shows, that General Grant's order to arrest Kent and his failure to find him, and Kent's escape, and the order prohibiting his return to the army, occurred July 2, four days before General Grant requested my assignment to the command of the troops of the department, and more than two weeks before I was relieved.

On page 654 of "Butler's Book," he attributes General Sheridan's refusal to obey his orders to my advice, and therefore relieves Sheridan of a part of his censure and puts it upon

[1] *War Records*, vol. 82, p. 31. [2] *Butler's Book*, p. 700.

me. General Butler ordered General Sheridan to fill a gap between his right and James River. There is no doubt that General Sheridan, being under special orders from Butler's superior, was quite in his right in refusing to abandon the service, which he was ordered by General Grant to perform, and to obey the orders of General Butler. But General Sheridan asked me for no advice in the matter and I gave him none. I knew nothing about the order. I was very anxious to have the gap filled, as already appears, and certainly should not have advised Sheridan not to fill it.

In "Butler's Book," page 714, the author writes of me as follows: "In 1863, for his conduct in battle, he was relieved from his command by General Burnside, then in command of the Army of the Potomac, and went to the Southern Army." This is both false and malicious. The "War Records" show the contrary. General Burnside was relieved from the command of the Army of the Potomac January 25, 1863.[1] On the 5th day of February, 1863, I was transferred to the command of the 9th Corps.[2] I was not relieved by General Burnside, and I know that he never questioned my conduct in battle.

General Butler on page 714 writes of me: "He ingratiated himself with Grant by his topographical performances in matters which resulted in the difficulty between Generals Thomas and

[1] *War Records*, vol. 31, p. 1004. [2] *Ib.*, vol. 40, p. 53.

Grant, which lasted until after the battle of Nashville in September [*sic*] 1864." I know of no topographical performance, but I have stated in this work what I did do under Generals Grant and Thomas, and have produced evidence of the estimates which were placed by them upon my work. It now appears from the records that an unfortunate result of my conduct was that General Butler sought without my knowledge to have me assigned to his command. As to my promotions, it is true that in 1862 I was appointed a major-general by President Lincoln, perhaps upon the recommendation of General McClellan, although I never knew it. My appointment was not rejected by the Senate, but owing to certain political reasons it was not acted on before its adjournment, and my commission expired by limitation, but in November, 1863, General Grant recommended my promotion, as appears from the letters printed herein. There was some delay because there was no vacancy. But the moment a vacancy occurred, my appointment was sent to the Senate, was sent back to have the date changed, and was at once confirmed without the usual reference to a committee. The statement that there was any delay when my appointment was finally sent in is utterly false.

There are, in "Butler's Book," other attacks upon me which are equally groundless. They are supported by assertions which are as false as

those to which I have called attention. But they are of such a nature that their false and malignant character cannot be shown by written records. I do not ask the public to apply strictly the legal maxim, "False in one thing, false in all," but I do think I am justified in believing that where so many of General Butler's statements are shown by the records to be willfully false, no confidence will be placed in anything resting upon his mere assertions.

ROSTER.

ARMY OF THE JAMES.

Major-General Benjamin F. Butler.
Chief of Staff — Col. J. W. Shaffer.
Chief Quartermaster — Lieut.-Col. C. E. Fuller.
Chief Engineer [1] — Brig.-Gen. Godfrey Weitzel.

TENTH ARMY CORPS.

Major-General Quincy A. Gillmore.
Asst. Adjutant-General — Col. E. W. Smith.

FIRST DIVISION.

Brig.-General Alfred H. Terry.
First Brigade — Col. Joshua B. Howell.
Second Brigade — Col. Joseph R. Hawley.
Third Brigade — Col. Harris M. Plaisted.

SECOND DIVISION.

Brig.-General John W. Turner.
First Brigade — Col. Samuel M. Alford.
Second Brigade — Col. William B. Barton.

THIRD DIVISION.

Brig.-General Adelbert Ames.
First Brigade — Col. Richard White.
Second Brigade — Col. Jeremiah C. Drake.

[1] After May 16, 1864.

EIGHTEENTH ARMY CORPS.

Major-General Wm. Farrar Smith.
Asst. Adjutant-General — Col. Nicolas Bowen.
Chief Engineer — Capt. F. U. Farquhar.

FIRST DIVISION.

Brig.-General W. T. H. Brooks.
First Brigade — Brig.-General Gilman Marston.
Second Brigade — Brig.-General Hiram Burnham.
Third Brigade — Col. Horace T. Sanders.

SECOND DIVISION.

Brig.-General Godfrey Weitzel.
First Brigade — Brig.-General Charles A. Heckman.
Second Brigade — Brig.-General Isaac J. Wistar.

BLACK DIVISION.

Brig.-General Edward W. Hincks.
First Brigade — Brig.-General Edward A. Wild.
Second Brigade — Col. Samuel A. Duncan.

CAVALRY.

Two Brigades under Brig.-General August V. Kautz.

APPENDIX No. 1.

(Referred to on page 52.)

General Smith to Senator Foote.

College Point, L. I., *July* 30, 1864.

Hon. S. Foote:

Dear Senator, — I am extremely anxious that my friends in my native state should not think that the reason of General Grant's relieving me from duty was brought about by any misconduct of mine, and therefore, I write to put you in possession of such facts in the case as I am aware of, and think will throw light upon the subject. About the very last of June, or the first of July, Generals Grant and Butler came to my headquarters, and shortly after their arrival General Grant turned to General Butler, and said: "That drink of whiskey I took has done me good." And then, directly afterwards, asked me for a drink. My servant opened a bottle for him, and he drank of it, when the bottle was corked and put away.

I was aware at this time that General Grant had within six months pledged himself to drink nothing intoxicating, but did not feel it would better matters to decline to give it upon his request in General Butler's presence.

After the lapse of an hour or less, the general asked for another drink, which he took. Shortly after, his voice showed plainly that the liquor had affected him, and after a little time he left. I went to see him

upon his horse, and as soon as I returned to my tent I said to a staff officer of mine who had witnessed his departure, "General Grant has gone away drunk. General Butler has seen it, and will never fail to use the weapon which has been put into his hands." Two or three days after that I applied for a leave of absence for the benefit of my health, and General Grant sent word to me not to go, if it were possible to stay, and I replied in a private note warranted by our former relations, a copy of which note I will send you in a few days. The next day, the Assistant Secretary of War, Mr. Dana, came to tell me that he had been sent by General Grant to say what it becomes necessary to repeat in view of subsequent events, to wit: That he, General G., had written a letter the day before, to ask that General Butler might be relieved from that department, July 2, and I placed in command of it, giving as a reason that he could not trust General Butler with the command of troops in the movements about to be made, and saying also, that, next to General Sherman, he had more confidence in my ability than in that of any general in the field. The order from Washington, dated July 7, sent General Butler to Fortress Monroe, and placed me in command of the troops then under him; and General Grant said he would make the changes necessary to give me the troops in the field belonging to that department. I had only asked that I should not be commanded in battle by a man that could not give an order on the field, and I had recommended General Franklin or General Wright for the command of the department. I was at the headquarters of General Grant on Sunday, July 10,[1] and there saw General B., but had no

[1] This date is erroneous. The interview was July 9, and I left for New York that afternoon.

conversation with him. After General B. had left, I had a confidential conversation with General Grant about changes he was going to make. In this connection it is proper to state that our personal relations were of the most friendly character. He had listened to and acted upon suggestions made by me upon more than one important occasion. I then thought, and still think (whatever General Butler's letter writers may say to the contrary), that he knew that any suggestion I might make for his consideration would be dictated solely by an intense desire to put down this rebellion, and not from any considerations personal to myself, and that no personal friendships had stood in the way of what I considered my duty with regard to military management, a course not likely to be pursued by a man ambitious of advancement. In this confidential conversation with General Grant, I tried to show him the blunders of the late campaign of the Army of the Potomac and the terrible waste of life that had resulted from what I had considered a want of generalship in its present commander. Among other instances, I referred to the fearful slaughter at Cold Harbor, on the 3d of June. General Grant went into the discussion, defending General Meade stoutly, but finally acknowledged, to use his own words, "that there had been a butchery at Cold Harbor, but that he had said nothing about it because it could do no good." Not a word was said as to my right to criticise General Meade then, and I left without a suspicion that General Grant had taken it in any other way than it was meant, and I do not think he did misunderstand me.

On my return from a short leave of absence on the 19th of July, General Grant sent for me to report to him, and then told me that he "could not relieve Gen-

eral Butler," and that as I had so severely criticised General Meade, he had determined to relieve me from the command of the 18th Corps and order me to New York City to await orders. The next morning the general gave some other reasons, such as an article in the "Tribune" reflecting on General Hancock, which I had nothing in the world to do with, and two letters, which I had written before the campaign began, to two of General Grant's most devoted friends, urging upon them to try and prevent him from making the campaign he had just made. These letters, sent to General Grant's nearest friends and intended for his eye, necessarily sprang from an earnest desire to serve the man upon whom the country had been depending, and these warnings ought to have been my highest justification in his opinion, and indeed would have been, but that it had become necessary to make out a case against me. All these matters, moreover, were known to the general before he asked that I might be put in command of the Department of Virginia and North Carolina, and therefore they formed no excuse for relieving me from the command I held.

I also submit to you that if it had been proven to him that I was unfitted for the command I then held, that that in nowise changed the case with reference to General Butler and his incompetency, and did not furnish a reason why he should not go where the President had ordered him at the request of General Grant; and that as General Grant did, immediately after an interview with General Butler, suspend the order and announce his intention of relieving me from duty there, other reasons must be sought, different from any assigned, for this sudden change of views and action. Since I have been in New York, I have

heard from two different sources (one being from General Grant's headquarters and one a staff officer of a general on intimate official relations with General Butler), that General Butler went to General Grant and threatened to expose his intoxication, if the order was not revoked. I also learned that General Butler had threatened to make public something that would prevent the President's re-election. General Grant told me (when I asked him about General Butler's threat of crushing me), that he had heard that General Butler had made some threat with reference to the Chicago convention, which he (Butler) said, he "had in his breeches pocket," but General Grant was not clear in expressing what the threat was. I refer to this simply because I feel convinced that the change was not made for any of the reasons that have been assigned; and whether General Butler has threatened General Grant with his opposition to Mr. Lincoln at the coming election, or has appealed to any political aspirations which General Grant may entertain, I do not know; but one thing is certain, I was not guilty of any acts of insubordination between my appointment and my suspension, for I was absent all those days on leave of absence from General Grant. I only hope that this long story will not tire you, and that it will convince you that I have done nothing to deserve a loss of the confidence which was reposed in me.

Yours very truly,

WM. F. SMITH, Major-General.

P. S. I have not referred to the state of things existing at headquarters when I left, and to the fact that General Grant was then in the habit of getting liquor in a surreptitious manner, because it was not

relevant to my case; but if you think, at any time, the matter may be of importance to the country, I will give it to you. Should you wish to write to me, please address, care of S. E. Lyon, Jauncy Court, 39 Wall Street, New York.

WM. F. S.

APPENDIX No. 2.

(Referred to on page 53.)

GENERAL RAWLINS TO GENERAL GRANT.

BEFORE VICKSBURG, MISS., *June* 6, 1863.
1 o'clock A. M.

DEAR GENERAL, — The great solicitude I feel for the safety of this army leads me to mention what I had hoped never again to do — the subject of your drinking. This may surprise you, for I may be (and I trust I am) doing you an injustice by unfounded suspicions; but if an error, it better be on the side of his country's safety than in fear of offending a friend. I have heard that Dr. McMillan, at General Sherman's a few days ago, induced you, notwithstanding your pledge to me, to take a glass of wine, and to-day, when I found a box of wine in front of your tent and proposed to move it, which I did, I was told you had forbid its being taken away, for you intended to keep it until you entered Vicksburg, that you might have it for your friends; and to-night, when you should, because of the condition of your health if nothing else, have been in bed, I find you where the wine bottle has just been emptied, in company with those who drink and urge you to do likewise, and the lack of your usual promptness of decision and clearness in expressing yourself in writing tended to confirm my suspicions.

You have the full control of your appetite and can let drinking alone. Had you not pledged me the sincerity of your honor early last March that you would drink no more during the war, and kept that pledge during your recent campaign, you would not to-day have stood first in the world's history as a successful military leader. Your only salvation depends upon your strict adherence to that pledge. You cannot succeed in any other way. As I have before stated I may be wrong in my suspicions, but if one sees that which leads him to suppose a sentinel is falling asleep on his post, it is his duty to arouse him; and if one sees that which leads him to fear the General commanding a great army is being seduced to that step which he knows will bring disgrace upon that General and defeat to his command, if he fails to sound the proper note of warning, the friends, wives, and children of those brave men whose lives he permits to remain thus imperiled will accuse him while he lives, and stand swift witnesses of wrath against him in the day when all shall be tried. If my suspicions are unfounded, let my friendship for you and my zeal for my country be my excuse for this letter; and if they are correctly founded, and you determine not to heed the admonitions and the prayers of this hasty note by immediately ceasing to touch a single drop of any kind of liquor, no matter by whom asked, or under what circumstances, let my immediate relief from duty in this department be the result.

I am, General, your friend,

JOHN A. RAWLINS.

APPENDIX No. 3.

(Referred to on page 119.)

Correspondence between General Butler and Generals Gillmore and Smith.

Headquarters Eighteenth Army Corps,
Department of Virginia and North Carolina.
Bermuda Hundred, *May* 9, 1864.

Maj.-Gens. W. F. Smith and Q. A. Gillmore, Commanding Eighteenth and Tenth Army Corps:

Generals, — While I regret an infirmity of purpose which did not permit you to state to me, when I was personally present, the suggestion which you made in your written note, but left me to go to my headquarters under the impression that another and far different purpose was advised by you, I shall [not] yield to the written suggestions, which imply a change of plan made within thirty minutes after I left you. Military affairs cannot be carried on, in my judgment, with this sort of vacillation.

The information I have received from the Army of the Potomac convinces me that our demonstration should be toward Richmond, and I shall in no way order a crossing of the Appomattox for the purpose suggested in your note. If, as I believe, General Kautz has been successful, the communications of the enemy have been cut so far below Petersburg as to render the Lynchburg and Petersburg Railroad useless as a means of communication with the South, and if the Danville road is to be cut at all, it had better be cut near Richmond on the south side, in conformity with the plan agreed upon between the lieutenant-general and myself. Therefore, as early as possible,

consistently with safety, you will withdraw your forces from Swift Creek, attempting, in the first place, to destroy the railroad bridge, and then complete a thorough destruction of the railroad as we return to our position, with the intention of making a subsequent early demonstration up the James from the right of our position. I have written you this note jointly because you have agreed in a joint note to me.

I have the honor to remain, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

BENJ. F. BUTLER,
Major-General, Commanding.[1]

HEADQUARTERS TENTH ARMY CORPS,
NEAR SWIFT CREEK, *May* 10, 1864.

MAJ.-GEN. B. F. BUTLER, Commanding Department of Virginia and North Carolina:

GENERAL, — I have received your dispatch in reply to the note signed by General Smith and myself. That note contained simple suggestions, nothing more. It could not have contained any recommendation from me to change plans, as I did not know what the plan of operation was, further than to cut the Petersburg and Richmond Railroad. Presuming that it was desirable to cut all the railroads leading out of Petersburg, I could see no better way to do it than the one proposed. I had had no opportunity to confer with General Smith until I met him in your presence, and did not converse with him upon the nature of his instructions, or the objects aimed at, until after you had left. My orders from you were to destroy the railroad, and afterwards, verbally, to support General Smith's movement on Swift Creek. Further orders from you, regulating the movements of the two corps, seem

[1] *War Records*, vol. 68, p. 35.

necessary. At Brandon Bridge the enemy have infantry and cavalry this side of the creek, and the approaches are open and covered by artillery on the other side. No practicable ford has been found yet. I am destroying the railroad near the junction.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,
Q. A. GILLMORE, Major-General, Commanding.[1]

May 10, 1864.

MAJOR-GENERAL BUTLER, Commanding Department of Virginia and North Carolina:

GENERAL, — I have the honor to acknowledge receipt of your letter directed to General Gillmore and myself, and to reply to it only so far as I myself am personally concerned.

Just after you left yesterday General Gillmore proposed this plan, and it seemed to me to be one worthy of your consideration, as having a tendency to save waste of life to a certain extent, and to more effectually cut the enemy's communications, than any infantry force on this side the river could do. I understood you yesterday positively to say that Colonel Kautz was going south on the railroad, which he had already cut. This was, in my mind, a leading idea in giving to this plan the weight which I did. The objections to it were, first, that it would have the semblance of a repulse here; and, secondly, that if we could force our way across the creek, we would gain valuable time over the other plan. These considerations which I knew would occur to you, were, therefore, unnecessary to mention. The suggestions were made, so far as I was concerned, merely to call your attention to a plan which seemed to me to possess merit. I am happy to state that General Gillmore's

[1] *War Records*, vol. 68, p. 36.

idea received the sanction of General Weitzel and Colonel Dutton. I have made this long explanation for peculiar and private reasons, and can only say in conclusion, that as I have never before been accused of infirmity of purpose, I shall not take the charge as one seriously affecting my military reputation. I had forgotten to mention that the letter was not drawn up or signed by me as a formal protest, but only in a semi-informal manner and in the quickest time of conveying to you the ideas which had been discussed by General Gillmore and myself. [From] pure consideration for the troops here and the cause in which we are engaged it becomes my duty to you to express the opinion that the withdrawal from this point must be made in accordance with some well-regulated plan published from headquarters of the army, and not according to the separate wishes and interests of corps commanders.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,
WM. F. SMITH, Major-General.[1]

APPENDIX No. 4.[2]

(Referred to in note on page 36.)

ASSISTANT SECRETARY DANA TO SECRETARY STANTON.

CITY POINT, VA., *July* 7, 1864, 8 A. M.
(Received 6 P. M.)

A change in the commander of the Army of the Potomac now seems probable. Grant has great confidence in Meade, and is much attached to him personally, but the almost universal dislike of Meade which prevails among officers of every rank who come

[1] *War Records*, vol. 68, p. 624. [2] *Ib.*, vol. 80, p. 35.

in contact with him, and the difficulty of doing business with him felt by every one except Grant himself, so greatly impair his capacities for usefulness and render success under his command so doubtful, that Grant seems to be coming to the conviction that he must be relieved. The facts in the matter have come very slowly to my knowledge, and it was not until yesterday that I became certain of some of the most important. I have long known Meade to be a man of the worst possible temper, especially toward his subordinates. I do not think he has a friend in the whole army. No man, no matter what his business or his service, approaches him without being insulted in one way or another, and his own staff officers do not dare to speak to him, unless first spoken to, for fear of either sneers or curses. The latter, however, I have never heard him indulge in very violently, but he is said to apply them often without occasion and without reason. At the same time — as far as I am able to ascertain — his generals have lost their confidence in him as a commander. His order for the last series of assaults upon Petersburg, in which he lost 10,000 men without gaining any decisive advantage, was to the effect that he had found it impracticable to secure the coöperation of corps commanders, and therefore each one was to attack on his own account and do the best he could by himself. Consequently each gained some advantage of position, but each exhausted his own strength in so doing, while for the want of a general purpose and a general commander to direct and concentrate the whole, it all amounted to nothing but heavy loss to ourselves. Of course there are matters about which I cannot make inquiries, but what I have above reported is the general sense of what seems to be the opinion of fair-

minded and zealous officers. For instance, I know that Gen. Wright has said to a confidential friend that all of Meade's attacks have been made without brains and without generalship. The subject came to pretty full discussion at Grant's headquarters last night, on occasion of a correspondence between Meade and Wilson. The "Richmond Examiner" charges Wilson with stealing not only negroes and horses, but silver plate and clothing on his raid, and Meade, taking the statement of the "Examiner" for truth, reads Wilson a lecture, and calls on him for explanations. Wilson denies the charges of robbing women and churches, and hopes Meade will not be ready to condemn his command because its operations have excited the ire of the public enemy. This started the conversation in which Grant expressed himself quite frankly as to the general trouble with Meade, and his fear that it would become necessary to relieve him. In such event he said it would be necessary to put Hancock in command.

C. A. Dana.

Hon. E. M. Stanton.

APPENDIX No. 5.[1]

(Referred to on pages 28 and 155.)

Correspondence between General Butler and General Smith.

June 21, 1864, 9 A. M.

Major-General Smith, — To so meritorious and able officer as yourself, and to one toward whom the sincerest personal friendship and the highest respect concur in my mind, I am and ever shall be unwilling

[1] *War Records*, vol. 81, p. 299 *et seq.*

to utter a word of complaint; yet I think duty requires that I should call your attention to the fact that your column which was ordered to move at daylight in the cool of the morning is now just passing my headquarters in the heat of the day for a ten-mile march.

The great fault of all our movements is dilatoriness, and if this is the fault of your division commanders let them be very severely reproved therefor.

I have found it necessary to relieve one general for this among other causes, where it took place in a movement of vital importance, and in justice to him you will hardly expect me to pass in silence a like fault where of less moment. The delay of Grouchy for three hours lost to Napoleon Waterloo and an empire, and we all remember the bitterness with which the Emperor exclaimed, as he waited for his tardy general, "Il s'amuse à Gembloux."

Respectfully,

BENJ. F. BUTLER, Major-General Commanding.

HEADQUARTERS EIGHTEENTH ARMY CORPS,
June 21, 1864, 3.40 P. M.

GENERAL, — I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your extraordinary note of 9 A. M. In giving to your rank and experience all the respect which is their due, I must call your attention to the fact that a reprimand can only come from the sentence of a court-martial, and I shall accept nothing as such. You will also pardon me for observing that I have some years been engaged in marching troops, and I think in experience of that kind, at least, I am your superior. Your accusation of dilatoriness on my part this morning or at any other time since I have been

under your orders is not founded on fact, and your threat of relieving me does not frighten me in the least.

Your obedient servant,

WM. F. SMITH, Major-General.

June 21, 1864, 5.30 P. M.

GENERAL SMITH, — When a friend writes you a note is it not best to read it twice before you answer unkindly? If you will look at my note you will find that it contains no threat. On the contrary, there are some words interlined, lest upon reading it over it might be possibly so construed.

Please read the note again and see if you cannot wish the reply was not sent. Pardon me for saying in all sincerity that I never thought you in fault as to the movement, as I understood your orders to be as mine were.

Truly your friend,

B. F. BUTLER.

HEADQUARTERS EIGHTEENTH ARMY CORPS,
IN THE FIELD, VA., *June* 21, 1864.

BRIGADIER-GENERAL RAWLINS, Chief-of-Staff of Lieutenant-General Grant:

GENERAL, — I have the honor to forward to you copies of correspondence with General Butler. I have no comments to make, but would respectfully request that I may be relieved from duty in the Department of Virginia and North Carolina.

Very respectfully your obedient servant,

WM. F. SMITH, Major-General.

APPENDIX No. 6.

(Referred to in note on page 132.)

Letter of Lieut.-Colonel Mordecai.

Governor's Island, N. Y. H., *August* 10, 1887.

Gen'l W. F. Smith, Wilmington, Del.:

Dear General, — Referring to a conversation had with you some months ago, the facts I related were about as follows: —

In the summer of 1864 I was on the Department Staff of the Army of the James, then commanded by Gen'l B. F. Butler. When in July of that year the order was promulgated directing Gen. Butler to return to the headquarters of the Department at Fort Monroe, and placing you in command of the Army of the James, I was at the hd. qrs. camp on the Appomattox River.

On the day on which the order became known to the officers of the Staff, Gen'l Butler, accompanied by Col. Shaffer, his Chief of Staff, left our camp with the announced intention of visiting Gen'l Grant's hd. qrs. at City Point to interview him in regard to the order. Gen'l Butler returned to camp about dusk, as I recall it, and as he dismounted from his horse, remarked to a number of his staff officers who were near him, "Gentlemen, the order will be revoked tomorrow."

The circumstances have ever been so impressed upon my mind that I think the above were the words used; they may be of little value in themselves, but indicated that Gen'l Butler expected prompt action to be taken. Yours very truly,

A. Mordecai,
Lt.-Col. of Ordnance, U. S. A.

APPENDIX No. 7.

(Referred to in note on page 108.)

Letter of General Hincks.

Cambridge, Mass., *December* 31, 1892.

General Wm. F. Smith:

My dear Sir, — Referring to our recent conversation concerning the assault on Petersburg, Va., June 15, 1864, I remember that I was sufficiently informed of your plans to know that you desired the troops of the Second Corps, expected to arrive by the Jordan Point road, to go into position on the left of my line as soon as they reached the field.

At about sunset, half-past seven o'clock, I was informed that General Birney in command of two divisions of the Second Corps had halted his column a short distance to the rear of my division and wished to see me. I hastened to him, and when we met, my first and almost only thought was to suggest to him a route by which he could reach my left most expeditiously, for my line had already gained possession of a portion of the enemy's works, and I was expecting to advance when and as soon as troops should arrive to cover my left and to extend the line in that direction.

I therefore proffered to General Birney the services of a staff officer, who would lead his troops directly to the left of my division, or to the point from which it had advanced against the enemy's defences. This service the General declined. I then suggested that he move forward towards my line and deploy to the left in the open field, continuing the capture and occupation of the enemy's works in that direction, as I thought he would meet with but slight resistance, if

any at all. To this and other suggestions to move at once towards my left, he objected, saying, he would not move his troops at night in presence of the enemy upon ground with which he was not familiar.

I think I have previously stated these facts in substance — of course I cannot give the exact language — in communications to you and to General Butler.

I am most truly yours,

EDW. W. HINCKS.

APPENDIX No. 8.

(Referred to in note on page 53.)

LETTER OF GENERAL WISTAR.

PHILADELPHIA, *January* 23, 1893.

MY DEAR GENERAL, — You have much obliged me by the opportunity to read the proof sheets of your book, which I find none the less interesting that as an officer of the Army of the James, I necessarily know something of the events treated.

Your explanation of the manner by which Butler forced a revocation (before it ever saw the light) of the President's order removing him and substituting you as Commander of the Army agrees substantially with what was told me very soon after the event by Hon. John Tucker, Assistant Secretary of War.

Immediately after Butler's short campaign, ending with our repulse at Drury's Bluff, May 16th, 1864, he succeeded in "bottling up" his army, as Grant described it, behind the line of Bermuda Hundred. That campaign brilliantly begun but ingloriously ended, had so clearly revealed Butler's want of adaptation for field operations, that the chances of

the Army of the James to effect anything under him worthy of its reputation and its desires, seemed very doubtful. Many of its officers felt that the army was composed of unsurpassed material, well trained and fairly experienced, and that it ought to have a fair chance under a different commander.

While expressing such views to Mr. Tucker, keenly sympathizing with the men who felt the injustice, he surprised me by saying that both the President and General Grant understood our feeling and were much of the same opinion, but were prevented by untoward circumstances from taking decided action just at that time. Supposing the "circumstances" he referred to were political, I naturally expressed impatience that a fine army of 40,000 men, the peer of any, with two distinguished corps commanders, both possessing its entire confidence, should be reduced to inactivity at such a stirring time, to suit the interests of any individual. That all the world could now see that Butler, however shrewd in civil administration, had uniformly failed to gain success in the field, and that justice to that army, no less than regard for public interests, required an immediate change of commanders regardless of any "circumstances." Either the justice or the earnestness of these strictures then led Mr. Tucker to give me in confidence the real reasons, almost as you have related them. For more than a generation I have respected that confidence. But every reason that then rendered silence expedient has long since disappeared, and as you have printed and are about to publish the facts from your own knowledge, I think it is now due to you and the other survivors of that army that Mr. Tucker's statement shall be given you.

It was in effect, that General Grant had actually

requested and obtained an order from the President relieving Butler and substituting you in command of the Army of the James. That Butler having immediately learned Grant's design from some of his own private means of information in Washington, before the order became public, induced Grant to visit in his company, several corps head quarters, where on pretext of indisposition Grant insisted on partaking of certain refreshments, notwithstanding the promise his friend Gen. Rawlins had exacted from all the corps commanders to keep spirits out of his way. The result was that the commander in chief became so much and so obviously under the influence of these various samples, that he not only exposed his condition to many persons, but on his return to quarters required aid to dismount. To crown all, while he was being assisted from his horse, Rawlins having come out to see what was the matter, impulsively exclaimed, "My God, there's the General drunk again after all the promises I got from the corps commanders," or words to that effect.

The evidence was complete; for Rawlins, though Grant's devoted friend, could not have denied his impressions thus incautiously expressed. The order was revoked before it was published, and Butler continued a little longer at the head of the army, thus doomed to remain for a time under his authority. Grant's occasion came not long after, through Butler's failure at Fort Fisher, as is known to all the world, but the world will not know these particular facts of history, till your book reveals them.

I have no wish to say anything harsh of General Butler, beyond what justice to others requires, for I am one of the few whom he has refrained from abusing in his book, and of whom he has even found

something complimentary to say. Nevertheless, I will add that it was unworthy of so shrewd a lawyer to claim for General Weitzel the small credit of ordering the wire obstacle to be stretched in front of the 18th Corps at Drury's Bluff. If there was any especial merit in such an ordinary device, every man in my division knew it was due to their corps commander and his careful reconnoissance of the line of combat. If General Butler made any personal examination at all of his army's fighting line on that occasion, it was unknown to us, for although holding an important command in that action and personally present on the line of battle, I did not at any time see the commanding general there, or hear of his presence within two miles of it.

I am, my dear General,

Very truly yours,

I. J. WISTAR.

To GENERAL WILLIAM F. SMITH,
U. S. Army (Retired).

INDEX.

Alford, Col. Samuel M., 172.
Allatoona, General Corse at, 13.
Ames, Brig.-Gen. Adelbert, 21, 23 n., 65, 67–69 n., 92, 93, 111, 128, 145, 157, 172.
Angel's battery, 71, 77.
Appomattox River, 2, 21, 51, 63, 70, 75, 90, 91, 94, 97, 102, 110, 113, 115, 118, 119, 121, 146, 150–152, 154, 157–160, 181, 189.
Assistant Secretary of War, *see* Dana, C. A., *and* Tucker, Hon. John.
Atlanta, operations of General Sherman near, 31.

Barnard, Gen. J. G., 18–20, 38, 39, 116, 120, 136.
Barton, Col. Wm. B., 172.
Battery No. 5, 75; No. 6, 79; No. 7, 79; No. 9, 76; No. 10, 75, 76; No. 12, 75.
Baylor's Creek, 74.
Baylor's field, 71, 72, 124.
Baylor's house, 78.
Beauregard, General, 26, 96–98, 117 n., 120, 129, 140, 146.
Bermuda Hundred, 17, 19, 21–23 n., 28, 51, 58, 63, 65, 67, 68, 92, 93, 96–98, 102, 104, 113–117, 119, 120, 122, 123, 126, 136, 138 n., 142, 160, 191.
Bermuda Landing, 145 n.
Big Bethel, General Butler at, 153, 164.
Birney, General, 25, 109, 110, 111, 190.
Blücher, General Butler compared with, 154.
"Bottling up" General Butler, 2, 21, 115, 116, 120, 191.
Bowen, Col. Nicolas, 157–160, 173.
Bragg, General, 12–14, 96, 97.
Brandon Bridge, 183.
Bridgeport, 8, 10, 11.
Broadway, Va., 69, 70, 87.
Brooks, Brig.-Gen. W. T. H., 20, 22–24, 43, 65, 70, 74, 75, 79, 82–84, 88, 90, 111, 140, 141, 147, 157, 158, 162, 173.
Brown's Ferry, 9–12, 14, 87.
Burnham, Brig.-Gen. Hiram, 74, 149, 173.
Burnside, Gen. A. E., 13, 169.
Butler, Gen. B. F., 1–7, 17, 19–21, 28–30, 32, 33, 37–40; takes advantage of General Grant's drinking habit, 41–59, 174–179, 189, 191–193; 60, 62, 63, 66–69, 78, 80, 88, 91–95, 100, 102–105, 109–112; occupies, and advances from, Bermuda Hundred in violation of orders, 113–121; 122, 128, 129, 132–134; his attacks on General Smith in "Butler's Book," 135–171; 172, 181–184, 186–188, 193, 194.

Canby, General, requests General Smith's transfer to his department, 134.
Chaffin's Bluff, 81.
Charleston Harbor, operations in, under charge of General Gillmore, 138.
Chattanooga, 8–12, 26, 28, 87.
Chester Station, 118.
Chicago convention, in General Butler's breeches pocket, 178.
Chickahominy, 31.
Choate's battery, 77.
Citadel of the Confederacy, 78. *See* Petersburg.
City Point, 18, 25, 42, 59, 64, 113–117, 122, 138 n., 189.

City Point railroad, 75.
City Point road, 69, 70, 72, 74, 75, 83.
Cold Harbor, 21, 28, 33, 38, 46, 66–68, 86, 93, 99, 106, 121–123, 128, 130, 136, 176.
Colored troops, 23–26, 61, 64–66, 68, 73, 77, 84, 86, 90, 92, 93, 109, 115, 133. *See also* Hincks, Brig.-Gen. Edw. W.
Comstock, Lieut.-Col. C. B., 41, 42, 56, 58.
Corse, Gen. John M., at Allatoona, 13.
Craft, Lieutenant of Signal Corps, report of, 95, 98.
Cumberland, Army of the, 8, 10, 135.

Dana, C. A., 12, 25, 27–29, 36, 104, 175, 184–186.
Danville road, 181.
Darling, Fort, 167 n.
Davis, Jefferson, 120, 146.
Dearing, General, 96–98, 124.
Deep Bottom, 156, 160–162.
Devens, Gen. Chas., 22, 67.
Drake, Col. Jeremiah C., 172.
Drewry's Bluff, 27, 39, 96–98, 117 n., 119, 142, 191, 194.
Duncan, Col. Samuel A., 71, 76, 78, 173.
Dunn house, 110.
Dutton, Colonel, 184.

Early, Gen. Jubal A., 31, 130.
Eighteenth Corps, 1, 3, 5, 16, 17, 27, 28, 32, 33, 40, 43, 50, 56, 62, 67, 68, 85, 86, 115, 118, 121–123, 136, 137, 152, 157, 158, 160, 161, 173. *See* Smith, Maj.-Gen. W. F.
Eighteenth Ohio Volunteers, 10.
"Examiner," Richmond, 186.

Farquhar, Capt. F. U., 173.
Fifth Massachusetts Cavalry, 71.
First Regiment, 77.
Fisher, Fort, General Butler's failure at, 6, 44, 48, 67, 153, 193.
Follett, Captain, commanding artillery, 82.
Foote, Senator, 50–53, 60, 174–179.
Foster, Brig.-Gen. R. S., 156, 160–162.
Fox, Captain, 10.
Franklin, General, 30, 37, 40, 44, 45, 132, 175.
French house, 88.
Friend's house, 83, 110.
Fuller, Lieut.-Col. C. E., 42, 172.

Garrett, Sergeant of Signal Corps, report of, 95.
Gillmore, Maj.-Gen. Q. A., 17, 20, 114, 115, 117 n.–119, 121, 128–130, 137–140, 142–154, 156 n., 172, 181–184.
Georgia troops, 78.
Gibbon, General, 25, 80, 81, 110, 111.
Grant, Gen. U. S., 2, 4–9, 13–20, 25–30, 32–38, 40; his drinking habit taken advantage of by General Butler, 41–59, 174–179, 189, 191–193; misrepresents General Smith in his Report of the War, 60–112; is responsible for failure to capture Petersburg, 113–134; 135, 138 n., 139, 151 n., 160, 166–170, 179, 180, 184–186.
Grouchy, General, 187.
Gulf, Department of the, 134.

Halleck, Gen. H. W., 2, 4, 18, 27–30, 32, 43, 50, 51, 116 n., 131, 132, 137.
Hancock, Gen. W. S., 25, 46, 61, 63, 64, 79–81, 91, 93, 94, 100, 101, 105, 107–112, 124–127, 129, 166, 177.
Harrison's Creek, 80, 95.
Hawley, Col. Joseph R., 172.
Hazen, Brigadier-General, 10.
Heckman, Brig.-Gen. Charles A., 148, 149, 162–166, 173.
Hill, Captain, 48, 49.
Hincks, Brig.-Gen. Edward W., 23, 24, 61, 65, 68, 70–77, 79, 83, 84, 86, 90, 91, 108–111, 128, 133, 159, 160, 173, 190, 191.
Hoke, General, 96–99, 123.
Holman, Colonel, 71, 72, 77.
Holston River, movement of Sher-

man's cavalry brigade toward, 13.
Hooker, Gen. Joseph, 11.
Howell, Col. Joshua B., 145, 172.
Howlett's, Widow, 142.
Humphreys, General, 34, 38, 127.

Illinois, 29.
Indiana, 29.

Jackson, Andrew, General Butler's ideal, 154.
James, Army of the, 1, 2, 4 n., 91, 94, 189, 191–193; Society of the, 66. *See* Virginia and North Carolina, Department of.
James River, 1, 19, 21, 27, 44, 80, 96–98, 102, 113, 115, 117, 121, 123, 146, 156, 160, 161, 169, 182.
Johnson, General, 97.
Jordan's field, 77.
Jordan's Point road, 70, 72–75, 81, 108, 190.

Kansas, 29.
Kautz, Brig.-Gen. August V., 23, 65–71, 84, 85, 91, 102, 128, 173, 181, 183.
Kelley's Ferry, 11.
Kent, Mr., correspondent of "Tribune," 47, 166–168.
Kentucky, 3, 29.

Lee, Admiral, 115, 145 n., 167 n.
Lee, Gen. Robert E., 27, 31, 81, 96, 122–124, 129.
Ligny, Blücher at, 154.
Lincoln, Abraham, 2, 5, 15, 18, 32, 33, 40, 43, 45, 50, 51, 130–132, 134, 170, 177, 178, 191, 193.
Livermore, Col. T. L., quoted, 72, 75.
Lodi, Napoleon at, 154.
Lookout Mountain, 11.
Lookout Valley, 9–12.
Lowell, General Butler sent to, 5, 44, 55.
Ludlow, Major, sent to Admiral Lee, 167 n.
Lyman, Col. Theodore, 27 n.
Lynchburg & Petersburg railroad, 181.

Macfeely, General, 14.
Marston, Brig.-Gen. Gilman, 173.
Martindale, General, 22, 24, 57, 65, 70, 74, 75, 79, 83, 100, 111, 155, 157–161.
McClellan, Gen. Geo. B., 170.
McMillan, Dr., induces General Grant to drink, 179.
Meade, Gen. Geo. G., 17, 27, 36 n., 46, 52 n., 88, 106, 112, 114, 122, 123, 126, 127, 129, 166–168, 176, 177, 184–186.
Meigs, Gen. M. C., 18, 19, 38, 39, 120, 136.
Michie, Lieutenant, 49.
Michigan Engineers, 10.
Middle Department, 131.
Missionary Ridge, 10, 13, 14, 26.
Mississippi, military division of the, 14.
Missouri, 3, 29.
Monroe, Fortress, 3–5, 16, 32, 33, 43, 113, 114, 117 n., 132, 175, 189.
Mordecai, Lieut.-Col. A., statement of, 132 n., 189.
Morgan, General, report of reconnoissance, 111.
Movable column, 38.

Napoleon, at Lodi, 154; Grouchy's delay cost him his empire, 187.
Nashville, 9, 15, 44, 170.
New Castle, 65.
New England, proposed command for General Butler, 4.
New Orleans, General Butler in, 39, 153.
New York, General Smith in, 5, 16, 175 n., 177; General Butler successful in, 153.
Nineteenth Corps, 5, 40, 43, 44, 50; history of, 87.
Ninth Corps, 170.
Norfolk, 3.
Norfolk & Petersburg railroad, 66, 81, 84, 102–104, 108, 113, 118.
North Carolina, *see* Virginia and North Carolina, Department of.
Norton, Captain, report of, 94, 95.
Noyes, Colonel, statement of, 100.
Number of troops in General Smith's command, 65–68.

Number of troops in Petersburg, 93–100, 112, 142.

Order No. 225, 5, 33, 41, 43, 50, 51, 58, 132; No. 265, 11.
Otey, Col. Jno. M., 96.

Peeble's house, 74.
Perkinson's saw-mill, 71.
Petersburg, 1, 2, 5, 7, 23–30, 33, 38, 39, 47, 50, 51, 53, 58, 60–65, 67–84, 86, 88, 89, 91–104, 111–113, 116 n.–129, 133, 134, 136, 150–154, 158–160, 166, 181, 182, 185, 190.
Petersburg & Richmond railroad, *see* Richmond & Petersburg railroad.
Pickett, General, 104.
Plaisted, Col. Harris M., 172.
Point of Rocks, 42.
Port Hudson, 86.
Potomac, Army of the, 1, 2, 5, 21, 31, 33, 36, 52 n., 63, 66, 107, 121, 131, 169, 176, 181, 184.
Prince George road, 110.
Pulaski, Fort, captured by General Gillmore, 138.

Rapidan River, 1.
Ravine in front of batteries 6 and 7, 79, 90.
Rawlins, Gen. J. A., 34, 53–55, 131, 179, 180, 188, 193.
Reynolds, Gen. J. J., 30, 40, 45, 132.
Richmond, 1, 17, 21, 79, 96, 104, 116, 117, 138, 151, 181.
Richmond "Examiner," 186.
Richmond & Petersburg railroad, 21, 182.
River road, *see* Spring Hill road.
Rosecrans, Gen. W. E., 3, 9.

Sanders, Col. Horace T., 173.
Savannah, General Sherman's success at, 44.
Second Army Corps, 25, 63, 80, 81, 106, 126, 190; History of, 86, 107, 108, 112.
Secretary of War, *see* Stanton, Edwin M.
Secretary of War, Assistant, *see* Dana, C. A., *and* Tucker, Hon. John.
Secretary of the Navy, *see* Welles, Gideon.
Senate, U. S., 170.
Shaffer, Col. J. W., 42, 69, 142, 144, 156–158, 172, 189.
Sheridan, Gen. Philip H., 168, 169.
Sherman, Gen. W. T., 3, 10, 12–14, 31, 44, 46, 88, 175, 179.
Sixth Corps, 104, 105, 158–160.
Smith, Col. E. W., 172.
Smith, Gen. W. F.: at West Point with General Grant, 8; appointed major-general by President, 170; appointment not acted on by Senate, 170; commission expires by limitation, 170; Hancock serves under as brigade commander, 107; his opinion of Hancock, 107, 112; appointed to command of Ninth Corps, 169; chief engineer of Army of the Cumberland, 8; meets General Grant, 8, 46; operations at Brown's Ferry, 9–12, 87; made chief engineer of division of the Mississippi, 14; highly recommended by General Grant for promotion, 14, 15, 37, 170; further operations in Tennessee, 12–16; transfer to General Butler's command asked for, 135, 170; appointed major-general without reference to committee, 170; comes East in General Grant's private car, 46; assigned to command of Eighteenth Corps, 16, 114, 136; organizing and drilling troops, 17, 136; his force lands at Bermuda Hundred and campaign begins against Richmond, 1, 17, 115–118, 120, 136; plan of campaign in violation of General Grant's orders, 115–120; does not approve of planof campaign, 115; joins with General Gillmore in suggestions to General Butler, 17, 118, 119; correspondence following, 119, 150, 181, 183; attempts of General Butler to show disagreement

between Generals Smith and Gillmore, also disobedience and profanity, 140–151; army practically without commander in the field, 149–155; device for protecting front of corps by telegraph wire, and General Butler's misrepresentations as to same, 162–165; General Butler "bottled up," 21, 115, 116, 120, 191; General Grant disappointed at General Butler's failure to get results, 18; investigation by Generals Meigs and Barnard, 19–21, 116, 120, 136; General Butler "satisfied with ability and aid of General Smith," 20, 28, 39, 136; is recommended for command of all troops of the department in the field, 20, 38; his plan for attack on Petersburg adopted with modifications, 121, 130; General Ames's division added to command, and corps ordered to Army of Potomac, 21, 38, 121; has 16,000 infantry, 65; has 17,000 men, 66; assigned position at Cold Harbor, 22, 136; battle of Cold Harbor, 22, 65; June 3, has 10,324 men, 65; 15,300 names on rolls June 11, 67; has 18,000 men, 67 n.; ordered to proceed to City Point (Grant) or Bermuda Hundred (Meade), 122 n.; corps of 10,000 men marches all night, 22, 65; embarks at the White House, 22; less than 11,000 arrive at Bermuda Hundred fit for duty, 22, 65, 68, 123, 136; expects his 3 divisions to join in attack on Petersburg, 67, 93; part of his infantry to be left as reserve, 67; marching orders, 68, 70; General Ames's division removed from command, 65, 92, 128; General Kautz's cavalry (2,500 to 3,000 men) and General Hincks's colored troops (about 3,700 men) added to command, 23, 65, 68, 91, 128; General Kautz of no assistance, 66, 85, 86, 90; less than 10,000 infantry take part in attack, 66, 92, 15,000 men, 68, 92; has attack of dysentery, 33, 110; hour of movement of troops to attack Petersburg, 23, 63, 64, 68, 70, 89; hour of meeting enemy, 23, 63, 64, 70, 89; details of morning's fighting, 23, 70, 73, 75, 89; develop main line of enemy about noon, 89; form line of battle at two o'clock, 23, 74, 75, 77, 78, 89; fortifications described, 75, 76, 78, 79; batteries attack enemy and are silenced, 23, 77, 79, 89; makes personal reconnoissance for two hours, 23, 76, 79, 90; reconnoissance stated by General Grant to be of empty works, 64, 78, 89; discovers ravine, 22, 79, 90; determines to attack by skirmishers supported by artillery, 23, 79, 82; General Hancock's approach reported, 80, 107, 124; requests General Hancock to attack on left, 81, 101, 107, 127; General Hancock fails to attack, 108, 109, 190; an hour lost through mistake of artillery officer, 23, 82; staff-officer of General Hancock arrives, 108; assault at 7 P. M. along whole line, 24, 63, 83; assault stated by General Grant to have been with colored troops only, 63, 64, 90, 133; results of assault, 24, 63, 78, 83, 84; ditch in front of General Martindale's division, 83, 101; battle over at nine o'clock, 24, 84; begin to turn works, 84; should General Smith have gone on to Petersburg, 91; road in front through ravine between wooded hills full of enemy's skirmishers, 24, 100; other obstacles, 101; no obstacles, according to General Grant's report, 63; less than 9,000 infantry fit for service, 24, 99; asks for reinforcements, 109; rebel reinforcements, 24, 94–100; no reinforcements to enemy, according to General

Grant, 63, 64, 93; General Hancock arrives, and proffers aid of Generals Gibbon and Birney, 25, 63, 64, 105, 109; General Smith is ranked by General Hancock, 105, 111; General Hancock asks advice, 64, and is requested to relieve colored troops, 25, 93; troops relieved between eleven and two o'clock at night, 25, 64, 101, 110; should General Smith have asked General Hancock to attack at once, 91, 105; receives order at midnight to push on; reports nonarrival of troops of Generals Hancock and Ames, 67, 111; tries to sleep, 110; question of attack before daybreak of 16th June, 106, 111; has 8,000 men, 66, 93, 106; reports of Assistant-Secretary Dana, 25–27; issues congratulatory circular, 85; result of General Butler's movement against Petersburg, 102–105, of General Meade's, 112; General Grant's reports, 27, 88; returns to Bermuda Hundred, 28; ordered to move on Petersburg, 28; marching orders, 156–162; insulting letter from General Butler, and correspondence, 28, 39, 136, 155, 186–188; asks to be relieved from service under General Butler, 28, 39, 45; accused of inspiring letter in "Tribune," 46, 47, 166–168, 177; sees General Grant intoxicated, and correspondence in relation thereto, 54, 174–179; in front of Petersburg, 1, 2, 33; recommended by General Grant for independent command in field, 2, 29, 30, 38, 45; applies for leave of absence, 33, 45; offered assistance of General Humphreys, 34, 38; letters to Generals Rawlins and Grant in regard to Generals Meade and Butler, 35–37; intentions of General Grant as to General Smith's command, 17, 52 n., 175; General Halleck recommends General Smith for independent command, 3, 30, 51; General Grant requests order assigning General Smith to command of Department of Virginia and North Carolina, 4, 32, 45, 51, 88, 193; order issued, 5, 33, 45, 51, 58, 175, 189, 193; has leave of absence, 37; confidential conversation with General Grant, 175, 176; goes to New York, 5, 37, 40, 176, 178; order suspended through General Butler's influence, 41–59, 168, 189, 191–193; returns to front, learns that he is to be relieved and ordered to New York, 5, 40, 46, 176, 177; General Grant's appreciation of General Smith, and feeling in army, 48; denial of General Butler's agency in removal, 40, 48, 49; letter stating General Grant's intoxication in General Butler's presence, 52, 60, 174–179; is wanted for Department of the Gulf, 134; disavows cabal against General Grant, 56–58; charged by General Grant with failure to perform duty at Petersburg, 60, 63, 64, 128, 133; causes of the failure at Petersburg, 124, 129; reasons for his removal, 7, 46–59, 177, 178; credit of removal claimed by General Butler, 50, 52 n.; General Grant willfully misinformed, 61; receives offer of aid from General Butler against General Grant's injustice, 62, 133, 136; refuses to join in attack on General Grant, 55.

South Carolina, troops transferred from, 114.

Southern Army, 169.

Spottsylvania, 106.

Spring Hill road, 70, 75, 97, 158, 159.

Stanley, Col. T. R., 10.

Stannard, Brig.-Gen. G. J., 157, 159, 160.

Stanton, Edwin M., 2, 4, 6, 12, 14, 15, 25, 27, 28, 32, 36, 43, 50–53 n., 104, 131, 135, 184–186.

Suckley, Dr., 62, 133, 136.

Suffolk stage road, 74.
Susquehanna, Department of, 131.
Swift Creek, 182, 183.

Tenth Corps, 1, 17, 21, 43, 115, 118, 137, 140, 145, 152, 156 n., 157, 161, 172. *See* Gillmore, Maj.-Gen. Q. A.
Tennessee, Army of the, 12.
Tennessee River, 8, 9, 11, 13.
Terry, Brig.-Gen. Alfred H., 67, 69, 102, 103, 143, 145, 172.
Thomas, Gen. Geo. H., 9–11, 13, 44, 169, 170.
"Tribune," New York, 46, 166, 167 n., 168, 177.
Tucker, Hon. John, 191–193.
Turchin, Brig.-Gen., 10.
Turner, Brig.-Gen. John W., 102, 148, 149, 151, 172.

Union League Club Theatre, 66.

Vicksburg, 86, 179.
Virginia, campaign in, 30.
Virginia and North Carolina, Department of, 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 17, 32, 33, 35, 38, 43, 113, 135, 168, 177, 188.

Walker, General, 140, 145, 147.
Walker, Gen. Francis A., *see* Second Corps, History of.
Walthall Junction, 96, 102.
Walthall's Hill, 75, 99.
Washington, city of, 16, 32, 46, 51, 115, 131, 175, 193.
Washington, Department of, 131.
War Department, *see* Stanton, Edward M.
Waterloo, 154, 187.
Wauhatchie, skirmish near, 12.
Weitzel, Brig.-Gen. Godfrey, 6, 20, 39, 41, 48, 49, 53, 67, 133, 162–164, 172, 184, 194.
Welles, Gideon, 115, 167 n.
West Point, General Smith's acquaintance with General Grant at, 8; General Gillmore graduated at, 138.
West Virginia, Department of, 131.
White, Col. Richard, 172.
White House, Va., 21, 22, 65, 93, 122.
Whiting, General, 120.
Wilcox's Landing, 126.
Wild, Brig.-Gen. Edward A., 173.
Wilderness, the, 106.
Wilson, Gen. James H., 47, 53, 58, 133, 186.
Windmill Point, 80, 125.
Wire at Drewry's Bluff, 162–164, 194.
Wise's brigade, 97.
Wistar, Brig.-Gen. Isaac J., 53 n., 173, 191–194.
Wright, General, 22, 37, 103, 158, 175, 186.

Yorktown, 3, 107.

288-5